

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**English**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Fergus' National School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Glin Co Limerick
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	20102T

**Date of Evaluation: 24-05-2017**



## **WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?**

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

## **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in English under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## Curriculum Evaluation

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date of inspection</b>	24-05-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Fergus' NS Glin, is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Limerick. Five mainstream class teachers are employed in the school, two of whom are job-sharing. Three teachers provide additional support to pupils. 124 pupils were enrolled in the school at the time of this inspection.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning in English is good; they demonstrate a good understanding and command of language, are exposed to a rich variety of reading materials and are facilitated to write in a variety of genres.
- *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is implemented very successfully in the school to develop pupils' early literacy skills in an integrated manner.
- While the quality of teaching is good, there is scope to develop differentiated in-class supports for pupils of varying abilities and for pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- Individual teacher planning and assessment was completed to a very high standard in some learning settings however, there is a need to devise a whole-school approach to planning and assessment in all mainstream and support settings.
- The school has engaged very positively with school self-evaluation resulting in a number of initiatives being piloted in the school to progress pupils' literacy skills.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Learning intentions and activities should be differentiated in all learning settings to ensure that pupils of varying abilities are appropriately challenged.
- A whole-school approach to planning and assessment in mainstream and support settings should be devised.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding and use of vocabulary. In infant classes, pupils use the language of *Aistear* themes with competence and confidence. Pupils from junior to senior classes ably summarise the plots of novels studied, describe the main characters that feature in them and can make comparisons between the themes of different books. Pupils in all learning settings recite a range of poetry well. During the focus-group interview, pupils described with enthusiasm how they are regularly facilitated to engage in discussions and debates. Accordingly, pupils in middle and senior classes can express opinions with clarity and can argue their point of view appropriately.
- Pupils are systematically exposed to a rich variety of reading materials. They are motivated, enthusiastic readers who read with fluency and comprehension. Many pupils in the school read extensively for pleasure.
- Pupils' understanding and use of the components of language is developed progressively. They complete functional writing tasks, free-writing activities and they are facilitated to write in a variety of genres. Samples of pupils' written work displayed in classrooms, recorded in copybooks and completed during the inspection are neatly presented and of a good standard generally.

### SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING IN ENGLISH: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

- The overall quality of support for pupils' learning in English is good. All teachers provide gainful learning activities for each strand of the English curriculum. An integrated approach is taken to the development of pupils' oral language, reading and writing skills. They are enabled to work collaboratively and use the target language meaningfully in a variety of contexts during the lessons. *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is implemented very successfully in junior classes to develop pupils' oral language in a thematic way.
- Lessons in English observed throughout the school were well-structured and resourced. Where very good practice was noted, learning intentions were shared with the pupils at the beginning of lessons. Teaching and learning activities were differentiated to meet the varying needs of pupils in these settings. Greater attention should be given, however, to the provision of differentiated in-class supports for pupils of varying abilities and for pupils for whom English is not their first language.
- The quality of individual teacher planning and assessment ranges from satisfactory to very good. All teachers present long-term and short-term planning in preparation for their work. Where very good planning was observed teachers identified differentiated learning objectives and outlined purposeful activities to progress, consolidate and assess pupil learning. Comprehensive assessment records of and for learning were maintained in some settings. This good practice should be extended to all learning settings and a whole school approach to planning and assessment should be drafted and implemented.
- The quality of support provided for pupils with additional learning needs is good in general. Early identification of emerging pupil need in English is prioritised and individual pupil learning plans (IPLPs) are devised to support pupils' progress in literacy. There is scope, however, to develop the format of IPLP's to ensure that specific, time-bound, learning targets are set. Clear roles should be defined in these plans for class teachers, support teachers, parents and where appropriate pupils. Pupil progress in attaining stated learning targets should be recorded regularly.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING IN ENGLISH**

- The school has engaged very positively in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. Whole-school planning, including SSE, is generally effective in progressing pupils' learning in English. The school is praised for the piloting of initiatives to develop pupils' spelling, comprehension, reading and writing skills in some learning settings. Assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives on individual teacher's practice, pupils' experiences and pupil attainment would optimise their impact.

## THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report.**

The board of management of St. Fergus' National School welcomes the positive affirmation of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. We believe the inspection report is a fair and accurate assessment of both. We welcome the acknowledgement of the many initiatives which are in place to support the teaching of English.

The board believe that the recommendations in the report are achievable and that they will enhance the high quality of teaching and learning already being achieved within St. Fergus'. The board is confident that these high standards will be maintained and built on in the coming years.

### **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The board also welcomes the recommendations made in this report. As reported, pupils demonstrate a good understanding and command of language and are exposed to a rich variety of reading materials. They are facilitated to write in a variety of genres. We will continue to ensure that pupils are motivated and enthusiastic regarding reading and writing and that they do so with fluency and comprehension.

As noted in the report, a whole-school approach to planning and assessment in mainstream and support settings should be devised. Since this evaluation, a whole-school template for individual teacher planning and for individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning profiles (IPLPs) have been decided upon by staff and will come into effect from September 2017. Within these IEPs/IPLPs, we will ensure that specific, time-bound, learning targets are set. These targets will be reviewed regularly and pupils' progress will be recorded. Clear roles will be defined in these plans as suggested in the report. This will enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for all children in St. Fergus'.

Within all teaching and learning settings, staff will ensure that pupils of varying abilities are appropriately challenged through the setting of differentiated learning intentions and activities. Particular attention will be given to supporting pupils for whom English is not their first language.

As a staff, we are committed to continuously improving our own practices as well as pupil outcomes. To this end the direction of future and reviewed plans and policies within St. Fergus' will be influenced by the recommendations within this report.