



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: History Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Newcastle Clonmel Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18538V
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26-09-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	14/12/2023

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* and the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019)*. 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 inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in History under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learner 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 of the school 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	26-09-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview• Observation of teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Meeting with teacher involved in leading provision for History• Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational primary school situated in the village of Newcastle, Co. Tipperary. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. At the time of the evaluation, there were one hundred and seventeen pupils enrolled. The teaching staff consisted of an administrative principal, five mainstream class teachers, two special class teachers, two special education teachers (SET) based in the school and one shared SET based in another school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good; the pupils enjoyed their learning and presented as enthusiastic learners.
- Pupils were provided with a range of high quality learning experiences in History.
- The overall quality of teachers' practice was good; teachers used a range of approaches to support learning.
- The quality of assessment was good and teachers maintained records of progress for pupils.
- The effectiveness of whole-school planning to support teaching and learning in History was good.

Recommendations

- Teachers should extend the whole-school History plan to include the progressive development of skills and concepts throughout the school.
- Teachers should develop and implement a whole-school approach to assessment of History to further support the pupils' progression in historical knowledge, skills and concepts.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good. The pupils presented as enthusiastic learners who enjoyed engaging in history activities. In the lessons observed the junior classes worked together, developing their understanding of time and chronology through discussing, examining and sequencing events in stories. Personal histories were being explored to support the pupils in developing a sense of time. They examined evidence to explore change and continuity by investigating similarities and differences between the past and the present. The middle classes recalled their previous learning on myths and legends; they demonstrated good knowledge of women in history and they explored the lives of people in the past. The senior classes engaged in varied station activities and they used primary and secondary sources to

interpret evidence. Appropriate subject-specific vocabulary was being developed to enrich and extend the pupils' language. Teachers were advised to display and revisit this language in classrooms to consolidate language learning in History. In some classes pupils used their skills to work confidently as historians; in other classes there was less emphasis on skill development. Teachers should collaboratively plan for a greater emphasis on the progressive development of skills throughout the school.

During the focus group discussion the pupils demonstrated a positive disposition to learning in History; they were competent and articulate in describing their learning. They spoke about connecting their history learning to other areas of the curriculum such as Visual Arts and Science. They also reported positively on their use of information and communications technology (ICT) in some lessons in History. The pupils expressed an interest in further opportunities to engage in project work. They described visits to key historical sites such as Cahir Castle, the Rock of Cashel and Swiss Cottage. They also reported positively on a history trail to the local Liam Lynch Monument.

2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learner experiences and teachers' practice

The overall quality of learner experiences was very good. The pupils interacted respectfully while engaging purposefully in meaningful learning activities. They had opportunities to participate in whole-class and group discussions with the teacher and with each other during individual and collaborative activities. In some settings History was effectively integrated with other curricular areas, and relevant literacy skills were being developed in parallel with historical understanding. There was scope to further enhance some classroom environments with the creation of history timelines to support pupils' understanding of time and chronology.

The overall quality of teachers' practice was good. Teachers were well prepared and the lessons observed were well structured with links to previous learning. In most settings the learning intentions were shared at the beginning of lessons. Teachers used a variety of approaches to support teaching and learning including active learning, stations, collaborative small group work, pair work and independent tasks. A wide range of resources was purposefully used during lessons to support history learning. These included stories, pictures, photographs, videos, games, artefacts, and texts.

The quality of assessment in history was good. Teachers used strategies such as teacher questioning and teacher-designed tasks. Teachers should now develop and implement a broader range of whole-school approaches to assess both knowledge and skills in history; this will support continuity and consistent progression in pupils' learning as they advance through the school. This should include a greater emphasis on pupil self-assessment to enable pupils to discuss and assess their own work, and to reflect constructively on their learning.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

The school planned effectively for History. The whole-school plan outlined the agreed content to be taught on a two-yearly basis but contained less guidance on the development of skills. Teachers should extend the whole-school history plan to include the progression of skill development throughout the school; this should support the content and enable further reflection on practice in the teaching and learning of History. The plan should also be expanded to include an agreed whole-school approach to assessment in History. This should provide information to enhance teaching, and also inform and support progression in historical knowledge, skills and concepts.

While History was not the current focus of school self-evaluation (SSE), the school had productively engaged with the SSE process. School leadership reported that the next phase of SSE will be directed towards reading, Gaeilge, wellbeing, and physical activity.

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 of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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
Good	<i>Good</i> 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
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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
Fair	<i>Fair</i> 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
Weak	<i>Weak</i> 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the positive findings of the inspection report which highlights the many strengths of the school. The Board commends our staff and pupils for the positive findings of the report and recognition of very high standards in relation to History. This is an accurate reflection of the hard-working environment that exists in the school.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board and staff are committed to continue to explore ways to enrich pupils' learning. The report makes worthy recommendations for ongoing future self- evaluation, planning and improvement. By engaging in self-evaluation, our aim as a school is to build on the areas of strength and respond appropriately to any identified areas of improvement. The whole school plan has been extended to include the progression of skills development throughout the school. The History plan will be modified to include a whole-school approach to assessment in History. This will involve collaboratively addressing and including the broader range of whole-school approaches to assess both knowledge and skills in History. Greater emphasis will be placed on pupil self- assessment to enable pupils to discuss and assess their own work and to reflect constructively on their learning.