



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: English Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Robertson National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Church Road Stranorlar County Donegal
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18731P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	21/11/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	15/01/2025

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 inspector evaluated learning and teaching in English under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
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.

Included in this curriculum evaluation report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

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.

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> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The school's current 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	21/11/2024
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

Robertson National School is a co-educational mainstream school situated in the town of Stranorlar. The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe. Staff comprises a teaching principal, three mainstream class teachers, two special education teachers, a home school community liaison (HSCL) teacher, and a teacher for children for whom English is an additional language (EAL). There are eighty-nine pupils currently enrolled. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for inclusion in education.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of learning was very good. Pupils showed a keen interest in learning and pupil achievement was very good overall.
- The quality of learning experiences was very good. Pupils were provided with very good opportunities to engage in dialogic activities with their peers.
- The quality of teaching was very good overall. Teachers had prepared suitable learning environments that promoted an appreciation of English and linguistic diversity.
- The quality of assessment was good. Teachers maintained good quality assessment records.
- The quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils' learning was good. The literacy targets within the DEIS plan supported the development of pupils' learning in English.

Recommendations

- To further enhance the support and monitoring of progress in English for identified pupils, classroom teachers should agree and embed a more consistent approach to the development of Continuum of Support classroom support plans.
- Teachers should extend the very good approach to target setting in the DEIS plan and make greater use of assessment analysis in the monitoring and review of DEIS literacy targets to maximise the positive impact on pupils' learning.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of learning was very good. Pupils enjoyed their lessons and learning and displayed very high levels of motivation in their learning. Pupils showed a keen interest in learning and pupil achievement in standardised assessments was very good overall. They also displayed enquiring dispositions, critical thinking and problem-solving skills in responding to their literacy tasks. Pupils were able to present and articulate their learning to a very high standard using subject-specific vocabulary of a suitably high register of language.

Pupils had access to a very good range of appropriate and motivating texts in reading across various genres from well-stocked classroom libraries. Pupils read with fluency and understanding, and they had a very good ability to self-correct independently.

During the focus-group meeting held as part of the evaluation, almost all pupils agreed that they enjoyed their learning in English and reported that they would welcome further opportunities to present their work to different audiences. They reported that they enjoyed being provided with valuable opportunities to use digital learning technologies during lessons, which assisted with the development of their digital literacy skills as well as providing alternative ways of accessing and representing their learning.

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

The overall quality of learning experiences was very good. A range of experiences was provided during the lessons observed, which included whole-class and station learning as well as paired, group and individual work. Pupils were provided with very good opportunities to engage in playful and dialogic activities with their peers. An environment was created for pupils that was linguistically diverse and print-rich. Highly respectful interaction with and among pupils were observed in all classrooms and learning settings. Pupils expressed a deep sense of pride in their work. Language experiences were appropriately scaffolded and extended to support pupils in their learning. Increased challenge for more-able pupils could have been provided more consistently in a small number of instances.

Pupils were able to sing songs and recite a wide range of poems and rhymes that supported their engagement with the learning content very well. Some very good quality displays were evidenced throughout the school and collated samples of writing demonstrated pupils' very good ability in writing genres, such as narrative, recount and report writing. Pupils were also provided with very good opportunities to develop skills in grammar that were contextualised to their learning needs and very appropriately aligned with the learning content. Activity-based learning was a key feature of provision with teachers providing purposeful tasks that supported pupil talk and discussion very well.

The quality of teaching was very good overall. Teachers had prepared learning environments that promoted an appreciation of English and linguistic diversity. Teachers were well-prepared and resourced for lessons and shared learning outcomes in most lessons. An excellent aspect of provision in some classrooms was the provision of success criteria for pupils in relation to the learning outcomes set. This most commendable feature of practice should be extended to all teaching and learning settings.

Teachers were well prepared for lessons and demonstrated very good knowledge of the pupils and the content to be taught. Teachers' recorded preparation outlined very good engagement with the *Primary Language Curriculum* (2019) and its supports to ensure high quality learning experiences. The *Continuum of Support* process was utilised to very good effect by support teachers. To further enhance the support and monitoring of progress in English for identified

pupils, classroom teachers should agree and embed a more consistent approach to the development and use of classroom support plans, as detailed in the *Continuum of Support*.

Teachers' collaborative practice impacted positively on the whole-school environment. Teachers regularly shared expertise and engaged in continuing professional learning while also developing links with external agencies as well as other schools. An atmosphere of collegiality permeated the whole-school environment.

The quality of assessment was good. Pupils demonstrated very good ability to reflect on and appraise the quality of their work. Teachers maintained good quality assessment records and made good use of the analysis of standardised assessment information in identifying areas of support. It would be useful to further develop the range of assessments used in order to more readily identify the priority learning needs of pupils so as to agree the next steps in teaching and learning on a more consistent basis. It would also be beneficial to consider updating the whole-school assessment policy to reflect recent guidance and to provide further clarity for teachers regarding whole-school approaches to assessment.

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

The quality of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning was good. The school had recently engaged in a purposeful review and development of the whole-school plan for English. The literacy targets within the DEIS plan supported the development of pupils' learning in English, with a particular focus on the improvement of pupils' reading comprehension strategies and the fostering of positive dispositions towards reading. The SSE process involved a review of pupils' work and ascertaining the views of teachers, parents and pupils. It would be worthwhile to further clarify how the literacy targets in the DEIS plan would be strategically implemented. This would further focus the actions identified and enhance the embedding of initiatives as well as the monitoring and review of progress achieved. Teachers should work collectively to extend the very good approach employed for target setting in the DEIS plan and make greater use of assessment analysis in the monitoring and review of DEIS literacy targets to maximise the positive impact on pupils' learning.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the pupils of Robertson National School about their learning in English

Date of inspection: 21/11/2024



Introduction

Your school had an inspection of English recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspector found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.



Meeting with pupils

The inspector visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. An inspector also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.



What did the inspector find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning was very good. Pupils were very keen to show their learning.
- Teaching was very good and teachers were very supportive of different languages.
- School planning for teaching, learning and assessment was good.



What the inspector said the school should do to make learning better

- Teachers should prepare plans to provide more support and guidance for some pupils in English.
- Assessment information should be examined to assist teachers in making decisions about the next steps for teaching and learning in English.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to pupils who took part in the focus group.**

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management welcomes the publication of this curriculum evaluation report on the teaching of English in Robertson National School and commends the staff and pupils on the very positive findings therein.

The board is pleased that the report acknowledges and affirms the very good standard of teacher practice, the provision of very good-quality learning experiences, the very high levels of pupil participation in an inclusive and supportive environment where children are motivated to learn and take pride in their achievements.

The board welcomes the recommendations and will seek to implement them in the coming months and school year 2025/2026.

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

Following consultation with staff the following actions will be taken in response to the recommendations in the report.

- Teachers will endeavour to develop a more consistent approach to the development of the Continuum of Support classroom support plans.
- An updated whole school assessment policy will be formulated in order to standardise approaches to assessment to maximise a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- A more systematic approach to reviewing and monitoring the DEIS plan to include Literacy will be developed.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective