



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: History

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Finians
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Spunkane Waterville Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	16014A
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	13-10-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	15/12/2022

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
2. Supporting pupils' learning 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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	13-10-2022
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

St Finian's is a co-educational, primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. At the time of the evaluation, there were 103 pupils enrolled. The school had four mainstream classroom teaching posts and two special education posts, one of which was filled in a job-sharing capacity.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good; pupils in all classes demonstrated appropriate knowledge and understanding of a range of accounts and stories associated with historical events.
- The quality of pupils' learning experiences was good with pupils displaying a knowledge and appreciation of their rich local heritage.
- The quality of teaching was good overall and interactions between pupils and teachers were positive and respectful.
- Teachers were well prepared for lessons and long-term and short-term planning was used to guide provision at classroom level.

Recommendations

- As identified by the school in their development plan, the principal and teachers should formulate and implement a whole-school plan for History.
- The staff should collaboratively review the range of approaches in place to assessment and develop a whole-school agreed approach to this aspect of provision.
- Greater attention should be devoted to differentiation by teachers in some learning settings to ensure that all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level in their learning.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The quality of pupils' learning was good and pupils in all classes demonstrated appropriate knowledge and understanding of a range of accounts and stories associated with historical events. They had an age-appropriate understanding of concepts such as time and chronology, change and continuity and story. Interactions amongst pupils themselves and with their teachers were very positive and respectful and pupils demonstrated an enquiring attitude towards themselves and those around them. They listened attentively and teachers demonstrated very good classroom management skills.

Pupils in infant classes were motivated and engaged by a range of well-chosen artefacts during the lesson observed. They gained an appreciation and understanding of the concept of time and chronology through the strand of *Story* and exploration of personal histories. Pupils in the middle classes demonstrated an awareness of personal and family history and senior classes had a commendable understanding of *Ancient societies* and *politics, conflict and society*. While most pupils were engaged in lessons and enjoyed their learning, some of the learning tasks observed

required further differentiation to ensure children were engaged and challenged at an appropriate level. In some classes, good project work and wall charts showcased and reinforced pupils' learning while also supporting their recollection of historical facts. This practice of providing visual supports to reinforce and extend learning should be extended to all classrooms.

During the focus group discussion, pupils in senior classes reported enjoying stories from History and that project work and excursions to local historical sites enhanced their learning. They have used tablet devices regularly for research and presented projects to younger classes. They made good connections between History and other subjects such as Music and Visual Arts.

2. Supporting pupils' learning: Learner experiences and teachers' practice

The overall quality of learner experiences was good. Pupils were engaged purposefully in meaningful learning activities and had opportunities, during the lessons observed, to work collaboratively on tasks in small groups and pairs. Pupils in junior classes were highly motivated and engaged by the use of artefacts and animated stories. They have had opportunities to use the local environment to enhance their knowledge and skills in History. In senior classes, pupils have gone on field trips to local areas of historical significance as part of the history programme. People from the local community have been invited to the school and have given first and second-hand accounts of historical events to all classes. While some local sources of evidence and artefacts have been collected, there is scope to further develop pupils' historical investigation skills through the provision of more opportunities to examine and interpret evidence from primary and secondary sources.

History in junior classes has been integrated with work in other curricular areas such as Mathematics, English and Visual arts. Plans are in place to implement *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, which would provide very valuable opportunities for further integrated learning experiences.

In almost all classes, lessons had clear learning objectives. Teachers' effective, incidental use of the Irish language enhanced the pupils' sense of personal identity and cultural inheritance. In some instances, teachers' recorded preparation was appropriately linked to the curriculum and purposefully used to guide teaching and learning. However, in other settings planning and provision were restricted to the textbooks in use. The approaches to assessment included teacher observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests and some opportunities for pupils to engage in self-assessment practices. The school should now implement a whole-school approach to planning and assessment to ensure pupils' knowledge and skills are developed in a structured and incremental manner as they progress through the school.

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

A culture of improvement and collaboration in learning, teaching and assessment is valued in this school. The principal and staff have formulated a whole-school development plan which identifies key organisational and curricular areas for attention. The development of a whole-school plan for History is identified as a priority. This plan should clearly outline the approaches to be adopted in the implementation of the strand units of the curriculum at each class level. The principal should also ensure that there is whole-school agreement on the topics and skills to be explored and developed at each class level. There should also be agreement on the teaching methodologies to be adopted, the summative and formative assessment to be implemented and the approaches to ensuring effective differentiation.

The school's focus for this SSE cycle is on development of oral language skills. Opportunities to practice and reinforce these skills through the delivery of the history curriculum should be identified and developed as part of this process.

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;