



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Language and Communication Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Our Lady Of Fatima Special School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Carrigeen Street Wexford
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19266T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	03/10/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	06/11/2024

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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in **Language and Communication** 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 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> 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	02/10/2024, 03/10/2024
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

Our Lady of Fatima School, is a special school located in Wexford town. It operates under the patronage of the Bishop of Ferns. The school caters for children and young people diagnosed with a mild general learning disability aged between 4 and 18 years of age. While the learners all have a mild general learning disability most have additional difficulties. At the time of the evaluation, there were 117 learners enrolled in the school. School staffing included an administrative principal and deputy principal, twelve class teachers and eighteen special needs assistants (SNAs).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The school had a very welcoming, caring, and supportive atmosphere; teachers set high expectations for learners and made very good efforts to ensure that the school and classrooms were calm and conducive to learning.
- The quality of school leadership and co-ordination of provision for learners in Language and Communication was excellent, ensuring the effective delivery of a wide range of primary and post-primary programmes.
- The quality of learning was very good; learners were engaged, interested, and highly invested in their assigned tasks and wanted to achieve success in learning.
- The learning experiences provided for learners were of a very high standard.
- The overall quality of teaching was very good with some exemplary practice observed.
- A culture of reflection and focus on improvement in teaching and learning was evident; whole-school planning and preparation including, school self-evaluation was impacting positively on teachers' practice.

Recommendations

- While overall approaches to assessment were effective, there was scope in some instances for teachers to use the available data to inform more specific targets in individual Student Support Files.
- There were effective examples of collaborative learning in pairs and groups observed in some settings; teachers should extend this practice, including the use of in-class models of support and station teaching, where appropriate.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The quality of learning was very good. In the lessons observed, learners were engaged, interested, and highly invested in completing learning tasks to a high standard. Their pride in and sense of ownership over their learning was evident.

Learners listened attentively to their teachers and to each other. They engaged in discussion on a range of topics including, their own personal experiences and interests, uses of technology and various projects they were involved in using appropriate language and structures.

A love of reading was being effectively fostered. Learners spoke confidently about a range of books they liked to read based on their own individual interests. They participated well in many events during the year to promote interest in reading including, world book day, book fairs and visiting authors to the school. Each class had its own small library and in addition, learners regularly visited the local library. In the focus group discussion, learners spoke positively about the trips to the library. They also expressed that they would welcome a wider stock of books and a greater variety of books in their own class libraries. To further support pupils' confidence and competence in reading, teachers should, where appropriate, consider the provision of a wider range of opportunities for reading aloud.

Early writing skills in the junior end of the school were very well developed and learners demonstrated a very good understanding of the conventions of print. In the focus group discussion, learners responded positively that they enjoyed writing about their own individual interests and agreed that they had plenty of opportunities to write. Learners in the senior section of the school used their digital literacy skills effectively to complete project work and to engage with other curriculum areas in creative and imaginative ways. In the focus group discussion learners spoke positively about how teachers were kind and supportive to them and how they helped them complete tasks and improve their work. There were many fine examples of learners' written work evident in individual portfolios.

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

Learner experiences were of a very high standard. The school environment was stimulating and print rich with many attractive visual aids and reminders to learners on display. Interactions within and beyond the classroom were positive and conducive to wellbeing. Learners were provided with a variety of stimulating opportunities to develop their ability to communicate across the curriculum. This range of experiences included consistent use of lámh, explicit teaching of language to resolve conflict, regular class-led assemblies, presentations using digital technology, class discussions, debates and project work based on individual interests. Learning experiences were purposeful with some opportunities for collaborative learning in pairs and groups also observed. This practice should be extended further, including the development of in-class models of support and station teaching where appropriate.

The overall quality of teaching was very good with some exemplary practice observed. Lessons were very well prepared by teachers and activities carefully sequenced to ensure that new learning was consolidated and built incrementally upon previous learning and achievements. Intended learning outcomes were shared with learners and the focus of new learning was clear. Teachers were responsive, and adapted lesson content to support individual learning needs. Teachers set high expectations for learning and behaviour.

Overall, approaches to assessment were effective. Teachers used a range of assessment approaches including teacher observation, checklists, classroom-based assessments, portfolios, and more formal type assessment to identify pupils' learning needs and to provide a record of attainment. Teachers regularly affirmed learners about their learning and gave frequent formative feedback on how they could improve their work. In some of the Student Support Files reviewed, targets were not sufficiently specific to the pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers should make greater use of the available assessment data to inform more specific learning targets for all learners.

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

The quality of school leadership and co-ordination of planning and the provision for learners in Language and Communication was excellent. The school provides for the *Aistear* framework, Primary Language Curriculum, the Junior Cycle levels 1,2 and 3, Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Applied. A very good quality whole-school plan facilitated progression in learning supporting the provision of very well-structured and holistic learning experiences as learners progress through the school.

School leaders had successfully established a culture of ongoing reflection with a focus on continuing school improvement. The school liaised very effectively with other outside agencies and there were high levels of professional learning undertaken by many members of staff. School leadership ensured that teachers and SNAs had ample opportunities to collaborate and share this expertise. The plan to revisit some of the professional learning already undertaken was a notable feature of the school's responsive approach to the learning needs of its staff.

The school had engaged very well in the SSE process over the last number of years and school leadership had identified language and communication and wellbeing as the focus for SSE. A comprehensive school improvement plan (SIP) for Language and Communication had been developed by school leaders. It was very evident that the agreed whole-school approaches identified in the SIP were being consistently implemented by teachers and were impacting positively on learning. The centrality afforded to the voice of learners was a praiseworthy feature of the school's practice.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the Children and Young People of Our Lady Of Fatima School about their learning in Language and Communication

Date of inspection: **03/10/2024**



Introduction

Your school had an inspection of Language and Communication recently. This page for learners describes what the inspectors found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.



Meeting with Children and Young People

The inspectors visited classrooms and talked to teachers and children and young people about the work they were doing. Inspectors also met with a focus group of children and young people to talk to them about their learning.



What did the inspectors find?

Here are some of the main things:

- The school had a very welcoming, caring, and happy atmosphere.
- In the classrooms the inspectors visited, learners were very well behaved and respectful and were working hard to complete their learning tasks.
- The inspectors saw many fine examples of work completed to a high standard.
- In the focus group meeting the learners told the inspectors how the teachers treat them with respect and give good help to them in improving their reading, writing and spellings.



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

- The teachers should give learners more opportunities to learn together in pairs and groups.

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

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

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 of Our Lady of Fatima Special School, acknowledges receipt of the report of the Inspectorate on Curriculum Evaluation.

We appreciate the thoroughness of the evaluation and welcome the constructive recommendations provided. As a school committed to continuous improvement, we have reflected on the feedback and will take action to enhance our practices in line with the recommendations.

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

Recommendation 1: Use of Data for Specific Targets in Individual Student Support Files

While our current assessment approaches are effective, we recognise the potential to further refine the use of assessment data to set more specific, individualised targets for students. In response to this recommendation, we will take the following steps:

- Teachers will undergo a review of practice in data analysis, with a specific focus on translating assessment outcomes into precise, actionable targets for student support files.
- We will refine our student support files to ensure that individual targets are more specific, measurable, and closely aligned with assessment data.

Recommendation 2: Extending Collaborative Learning and In-Class Support Models

We are pleased that the evaluation highlighted effective examples of collaborative learning in pairs and groups, and we are committed to extending this practice across more settings. To address this recommendation:

- We will expand the use of collaborative learning techniques, including pair and group work, by sharing best practices among teaching staff.
- The school will initiate a plan to increase the use of in-class models of support, such as team teaching, station teaching, and co-teaching.
- A pilot program for station teaching will be launched in select classes, with a view to expanding this approach school-wide based on its effectiveness.

These proposed actions reflect our commitment to addressing the recommendations and ensuring that our students receive the best possible support and learning experiences.