



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Curriculum Evaluation: History Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Saviours National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Station Road Rathdrum Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	12529N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	07-12-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	30/01/2024

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## 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 History under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
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 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"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>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.</li><li>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.</li></ol>

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

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# Curriculum evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	06-12-2023 – 07-12-2023
<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 Saviour's National School is a co-educational primary school that caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It provides a special class for pupils with autism (ASD). The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Dublin and Glendalough. At the time of the evaluation, there were 127 pupils enrolled in the school. The teaching staff comprised five mainstream teachers, of whom one was the principal, and three special education teachers (SET), of whom one was deployed in the ASD class, and one was shared with another school.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in History was good. Pupils could recall and communicate key aspects of their learning articulately.
- The quality of pupils' learning experiences in History was good.
- Teaching in History was of a good standard overall, with elements of very good practice also observed.
- Teachers employed an appropriate range of assessment methods.
- The quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) was good.

### Recommendations

- As provision for the development of pupils' historical skills varied, all teachers should make provision for enquiry-based learning and enable pupils to engage with a wider range of evidence, including artefacts, replicas, photographs, and people regularly.
- In revising the school plan for History, teachers should allocate the curriculum strand units to each phase on a cyclical basis, align visits to local places of interest with relevant curriculum outcomes, and make more explicit provision for the progressive development of the pupils' historical enquiry skills.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of the pupils' learning in History was good, with very good outcomes observed in the senior classes. Pupils were motivated learners who were interested in learning about the past. They participated well in the lessons observed, applying themselves with enthusiasm and focus to their learning activities. In all classes, pupils demonstrated age-appropriate understanding of time and chronology, including the use of timelines. They could recall and communicate key aspects of their learning articulately. In the infant classes, pupils had produced simple family trees. Pupils in the junior classes reflected good understanding in the curriculum strand unit: *Change and continuity* and were able to compare and contrast both Christmas and toys in Victorian times with nowadays. In the middle and senior classes, pupils relayed key facts about the Titanic and World War II respectively, and demonstrated empathy

with the people affected by these events. Pupils described their project work articulately; projects produced by the pupils in the senior classes were of a very high standard. Overall, pupils were less familiar with local history. While pupils in the senior class demonstrated very good ability to interrogate a wide range of both primary and secondary sources, there was scope to develop the historical enquiry skills of pupils in other classes further.

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

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences in History was good. In all classrooms, very respectful interactions were observed between teachers and pupils, and among the pupils themselves. Classrooms and corridors hosted suitable displays to support and celebrate pupils' learning. A display of high quality sketches of the Titanic by the pupils in the middle classes was an eye-catching feature. Teachers were commended on the range of historical novels made accessible to pupils in the school library; in some classrooms, there was scope to extend the range of non-fiction books related to topics being studied. In the senior classroom, pupils were enabled to engage in historical enquiry using a broad range of evidence and visits to historical sites of interest. In other classes, there was potential for pupils to engage with a wider range of evidence, including artefacts, replicas, photographs and people, more regularly. As identified by the teachers, the school's forthcoming bicentenary would provide an ideal opportunity to explore the history of the school and its locality.

During the pupil focus-group interview, pupils explained that they liked learning about past generations and what had happened before they were born. They noted that they enjoyed project work, mind maps, and watching videos. They were particularly enthusiastic about historical activities related to EU Day and the sharing of their projects on the Irish famine with other classes. They advised that they would appreciate more opportunities to engage in enquiry about historical topics of particular interest to themselves.

The overall quality of teaching observed in History was good. In all classrooms, interactions between teachers and pupils were positive and respectful. In the lessons observed, teachers shared the intended learning outcomes with pupils. Teachers had prepared well and demonstrated good knowledge of the topics being studied. To enhance their pupils' learning, teachers made relevant links with other curricular areas, in particular Visual Arts, Drama and literacy. They made use of digital technologies, including videos and slides, in their teaching. In the best instances, teachers used these and other resources very skilfully to enhance pupils' understanding and appreciation of topics and develop pupils' sense of empathy. They also used questioning very effectively to probe and extend pupils' understanding. Overall, there was scope to reduce the teacher-directed aspect of lessons and to make greater provision for pupils to engage in discussions and activities designed to develop their historical enquiry skills.

Teachers employed an appropriate range of assessment strategies to check pupils' understanding and monitor their learning. They also enabled pupils to maintain a portfolio of work samples from junior infants to sixth class. It was timely to agree a whole-school approach to assessing pupils' learning more systematically and to use this information to inform their next steps in learning.

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

The quality of whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) was good. The school leaders had engaged collaboratively in the SSE process, soliciting the views of teachers, pupils and parents on pupils' learning in History. Arising from this, the teachers recognised the need to make pupils' learning more activity based and to help them see the relevance of History to their lives. In line with agreed actions, each classroom displayed a timeline and the teachers had commenced a collaborative review of the whole-school plan for History. In revising this plan, teachers were advised to allocate the curriculum strand units to each phase on a cyclical

basis, align visits to local places of interest with relevant curriculum outcomes, and to make more explicit provision for the progressive development of the pupils' historical enquiry skills.

## 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**

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

We found the curriculum inspection valuable and informative. Each classroom had an opportunity to prepare their teaching and learning which allowed all children to be part of the process. It was beneficial having an external view on teaching and learning of history and we look forward to implementing the recommendations.