



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: English REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Headford Primary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Church Road Headford County Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	20583P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	03/12/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	10/02/2026

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations currently report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects and curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum (2025). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject or curriculum area in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspectors 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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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>Bí Cineálta</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils.3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>

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

Curriculum evaluation

Dates of inspection	02/12/2025 and 03/12/2025
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

Headford Primary School is a co-educational primary school located in Headford, County Galway. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. At the time of the evaluation, the school was in its second year since the amalgamation of the previously co-located boys' and girls' schools. The school had six mainstream teachers and three special education teachers, one of whom was the principal. There were 139 pupils enrolled in the school from junior infants to sixth class.

Summary of main findings and recommendations

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good; the majority of pupils presented as confident and articulate learners.
- Pupils' learning experiences were very good overall, with playful approaches central to their lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching was very good.
- Support for pupils who had been prioritised for additional support in English was of a very high standard.
- The quality of assessment was very good, with pupils' peer-assessment and self-assessment skills being incrementally developed throughout the school.

Recommendations

- In order to further develop pupils' abilities to present, to debate and to report, a whole-school approach to the teaching of all the oral language genres should be agreed and implemented.
- To provide additional opportunities to pupils for deeper exploration of each writing genre and to master genre-specific language, school leadership should agree and implement a more structured approach to the teaching of the writing process.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good. The majority of pupils presented as motivated learners and were highly engaged in their learning activities.

Pupils demonstrated very well-developed early literacy skills, including very good phonological awareness. These skills were explicitly taught in the infant and junior classes and incrementally developed as the pupils progressed through the school. Most pupils demonstrated very good understanding of the conventions of print and their word attack and decoding skills were developed to a high standard. It was highly commendable that pupils had opportunities to read graded readers, as well as experiencing whole-class texts. Most pupils read with fluency and expression appropriate to their age and class level. Independent reading for pleasure was encouraged and supported through well-stocked classroom libraries, and throughout the school

pupils read and listened to a range of novels. Pupils understood and could apply a range of comprehension strategies effectively.

The pupils' functional writing skills, including their understanding of *Conventions of print and sentence structure*, were well developed at all class levels. It was highly commendable that copybooks were in use from the early stages of pupils' writing development. Samples of pupils' independent written work, some of which were of a very high standard, were displayed in classrooms and corridors and presented in the pupils' copybooks. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrated familiarity with the writing genres from the curriculum.

In the *Oral Language* strand, pupils demonstrated a very good ability to listen actively and to engage purposefully with others, drawing effectively on their collaborative skills. Most pupils were articulate in their responses in class and group discussions, and in their interactions with the inspectors. Pupils at all class levels recited rhymes and poetry with expression and meaning, which supported their oral language development. It was highly commendable that many pupils had explored some of the strategies that poets use to engage their audience, and many pupils had been given opportunities to compose their own poetry. Pupils at a few class levels had opportunities to present their project work to their peers and had engaged in some informal debating. In order to further develop all pupils' abilities to present, to debate and to report, a whole-school approach to the teaching of all the oral language genres should be agreed and implemented.

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

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences was very good, with playful approaches featuring prominently in lessons. Interactions between teachers and pupils, and among pupils, were very respectful. In all the lessons observed, pupils had opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. There was a very good balance between teacher-led and pupil-led experiences, including pair work, station teaching, group work and whole-class teaching. Learning environments were supportive of learning in English and included word walls and the display of key vocabulary and samples of the pupils' work. All lessons had clear focus and it was evident that there were high expectations for pupils' learning.

Pupils in the focus group reported that they enjoyed their English lessons, in particular literacy games, creating their own word searches, reading novels and non-fiction texts from the school libraries, and writing stories and poems. They noted that silent reading time which had been provided in school had helped promote their enjoyment of independent reading. It would be useful for the teachers to maintain a record of the books read by pupils as well as providing opportunities for reviews or recommendations on books by pupils for their peers. The senior class pupils described how their digital literacy skills were being developed through creating and formatting digital texts, inserting pictures, and creating slideshows. These experiences and opportunities to develop digital literacy skills should now be extended to pupils in other classrooms.

The overall quality of teaching was very good. All teachers demonstrated very good classroom management skills. All teachers prepared very effectively for the lessons observed and each lesson was well structured and paced. A range of teaching and learning resources was used to support the lessons. While the writing genres were taught throughout the school, there was a need for teachers to agree and implement a more structured approach to the teaching of the writing process. Pupils at all class levels should have more time to explore the genre frameworks, plan, draft and edit their creative writing and master the genre-specific language. Teachers should also provide more opportunities for the pupils to transfer the skills developed in their genre writing to other subjects such as History, Geography, Science and Irish.

Pupils prioritised for additional support in English received very high-quality support, delivered through an appropriate balance of in-class and withdrawal approaches. Student Support Files were in place for all pupils in receipt of support teaching in English and priority areas of learning had been identified. The targets in the Student Support Plans reviewed by the inspectors were specific and measurable, and they were underpinned by robust assessment information.

Periodic reviews of the plans were conducted, recording pupils' progress towards the achievement of their learning targets.

The quality of assessment in the school was very good. Teachers used very effective questioning to monitor pupils' learning during lessons. Each teacher maintained an assessment folder with checklists, results of tasks and tests, and samples of the pupils' work. Pupils' peer-assessment and self-assessment skills were being incrementally developed in the school, with pupils able to describe the features of high-quality work in English. Highly commendable conferencing and constructive, supportive, peer-assessment of pupils' creative work was observed in the senior classes. Pupils' written work was monitored effectively at all class levels and there were some good examples of written formative feedback given by teachers at some class levels to support and guide pupils in improving their work. This practice should be extended to all classes.

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

Commendably, since amalgamation, school leadership had developed a whole-school English plan aligned to the strands and learning outcomes of the *Primary Language Curriculum*. It provided guidance to teachers on the teaching of comprehension strategies at each class level, the development of grammar skills, the promotion of reading, and examples of poems and rhymes to be taught. It is recommended that the whole-school plan include clearer guidance on the teaching of the writing process, using a two-year cycle to cover all the genres.

The school had used the SSE process to plan for improvement in English and had developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) which outlined the key actions planned. It would be useful for the school to develop specific and measurable short-term targets in the SIP to support more effective monitoring of the achievement of targets or progress towards their achievement.



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For the pupils of Headford Primary School about their learning in English

Dates of inspection: 02/12/2025 and 03/12/2025



Introduction

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



What did the inspectors do during the visit?

The inspectors 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 inspectors find?

Here are some of the main things:

- The pupils were doing very well in English.
- Lessons were fun and interesting, and this helped pupils to enjoy learning English.
- Teachers were very good at teaching English.
- The school was very good at helping pupils who needed extra support in English.



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

- Teachers should help pupils to practise and improve their speaking skills through presentations, debates, reports and other tasks.
- Teachers should ensure that pupils have more time, when working on each writing genre, to explore, plan, draft and edit their creative writing.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to pupils 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