

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Science**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Tullydonnell Togher Drogheda County Louth
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	014340

**Date of inspection: 18-04-2018**



---

An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?**

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). 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 Science 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

## Curriculum Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	18-04-2018
<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

Scoil Naomh Cholmcille is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. The school staffing includes an administrative principal, six mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers, of whom two are in shared posts and one is teaching an early intervention special class. At the time of the evaluation, 171 pupils were enrolled in the school.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupil learning in Science is very good.
- Pupils display very high levels of motivation and engagement in lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good practice observed.
- Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) is a feature of provision.
- A systematic record of pupil attainment is in operation in all classes; there is scope to further its use and application.
- While the quality of school planning is good overall, there is scope to develop the content of the plan so as to better inform and reflect current practice in the school.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school's recording of pupil attainment in Science should be extended to ensure that it informs future planning and learning experiences for pupils more usefully.
- The school science plan should be reviewed to better support a developmental concept and skills-based approach to the teaching of Science.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is very good. Pupil knowledge, skills and attitudes are of a very high standard. In all classes, pupils discussed their learning very competently and confidently using appropriate scientific language. The school environment supports and celebrates pupils' learning effectively. The commendable work of the Green Schools committee contributes to the learning in the strand *Environmental Awareness and Care*, and the school grounds, deserving of much praise, are used very effectively to support learning in the strand *Living Things*.

All pupils demonstrated a deep awareness and respect for their local environment. An appropriate level of challenge was provided in most settings to stimulate pupils to develop their scientific skills in a purposeful manner. Where most effective practice was observed, pupils were both highly motivated and engaged. Pupils who participated in the focus-group discussion displayed very

positive attitudes to their learning and spoke confidently of the relevance and importance of science in their daily lives. Pupils also reported that lessons are fun and that they enjoy working independently and collaboratively when engaging in experiments and projects.

Pupils record work on worksheets regularly. Consideration should be given to exploring different methods of recording and maintaining pupils' work in order to allow pupils to reflect, discuss and monitor their own learning.

## **2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE**

Pupils' learning in Science is very well supported throughout the school. Stimulating and well-resourced learning environments are provided which meaningfully support pupils' learning. A wide variety of commendable opportunities are provided to the pupils such as nature walks, participation in the Green Schools Programme, the Junior Entrepreneur programme, a pilot project on Nano Science, the *Find out Friday* assembly strategy and a committee for the establishment of a sensory garden. The school has also organised guest speakers and past pupils to visit the school to present their scientific research and engage in some open-ended investigations with pupils.

The quality of teaching in Science is good overall, with some very effective practice observed. Where best practice was observed, lessons were planned very carefully and structured skilfully with a balance between teacher input and purposeful pupil engagement. In most settings, teachers activated prior knowledge very effectively before sharing the learning intention of the lesson. This very good practice should be extended to all settings. Active learning methodologies were employed in an effective way in most classrooms to develop pupils' scientific knowledge and skills. While a majority of teachers used very successful questioning techniques to probe, support and extend pupils' learning, this is an area where further development would be beneficial. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used very effectively as a teaching and learning tool in most activities observed.

The school principal promotes a culture of reflection, improvement and collaboration. Most teachers demonstrated very good levels of subject knowledge and skilful teaching. While teachers collectively agree and implement whole-school approaches in Science, greater opportunity exists for teachers to share expertise through co-teaching and observation.

The overall quality of assessment is good. A range of assessment-of-learning strategies is used to enable pupils to reflect on their learning. A whole-school assessment checklist is in operation in all classes. An extension of this checklist is advised in order to capture the learning of key concepts and skills thereby informing teaching and learning more meaningfully.

While formative feedback is a feature in each classroom, high-quality formative feedback was observed in a minority of settings. A whole-school system for storing pupils' work in Science would act as a useful record of progression and enable all teachers to provide high-quality formative feedback to pupils.

## **3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING**

The quality of whole-school planning for Science is good in most aspects. While the written plan lists all strands and strand units to be covered in each class on a monthly basis, there is scope to develop the content of the plan so as to better inform and reflect current practice in the school. An outline of

key topics and skills should be incorporated as well as a list of famous scientists to be studied and the subject specific language to be taught at each class level in a progressive and developmental approach.

The school has an extensive range of resources to support teaching and learning and these resources are managed effectively.

## **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 Scoil Naomh Cholmcille welcomes the affirmation of the 'very high standard of pupil knowledge, skills and attitudes' in the area of science. The board is delighted with the confirmation that 'pupils discussed their learning competently and confidently using appropriate scientific language' which is the core of the objective that the teachers set out to achieve in all subject areas in the school.

The positive attitude and feedback from pupils in relation to their learning and the linkage with everyday relevance substantiates the central aspiration of our teachers, to inspire and motivate a love of learning, and to apply that learning in life.

The board acknowledges the 'wide variety of commendable opportunities provided for the children' and shall further inform planning and recording so that these opportunities are evident within the respective records as was recommended.

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

{Blank}

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;