

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Ainm na scoile / School name | Scoil Náisiúnta Pádraig Naofa Fanóir |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Fanore Ballyvaughan County Clare |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 13379C |

Date of inspection: 30-05-2019



**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 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.

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

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date of inspection | 30-05-2019 |
| 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

Scoil Náisiúnta Pádraig Naofa Fanóir (Fanore National School) is a co-educational primary school situated in the village of Fanore, County Clare, which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway. The school has two mainstream class teachers, including a teaching principal. A special education teacher (SET) is also based in the school. There were thirty-one pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Pupils' learning in Science is good overall; the pupils' application of their learning to designing and making activities is limited, however.
- Highly commendable learning experiences support the pupils' learning in Science.
- Overall, teaching in the lessons observed was very good.
- School planning for Science is good overall; the investigations to be conducted in each strand of the science curriculum are not documented in the plan.
- The pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards environmental care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pupils should be enabled to apply their learning in Science to designing and making activities across all strands of the science curriculum.
- The investigations to be conducted should be outlined in the school plan.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is good. Almost all pupils demonstrated very positive attitudes to Science and were motivated to learn during the lessons observed. The pupils in the focus group interview reported very high levels of enjoyment in their learning in Science.

The majority of pupils could discuss their learning successfully. Most pupils demonstrated very high levels of understanding of the strands *Living things* and *Environmental awareness and care*. The pupils' commitment to the care of the environment is highly commendable. While the pupils have engaged in work in the strand *Energy and forces*, their understanding of the concepts in this strand should be further developed.

The majority of pupils achieve a good standard in developing their skills as scientists. These include the skills of predicting, observing, investigating, analysing and recording. Most pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the concept of the fair test when conducting investigations. The development of pupils' oral language skills, through the presentation of their work in Science to their peers, is highly commendable.

Very good samples of pupils' work in Science, using a variety of media, are displayed in classrooms and on corridors. While the pupils at all class levels have engaged in some designing and making activities, they should be enabled to engage in such activities across all strands of the science curriculum.

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

The support for pupils' learning in Science is very good overall, with very good learner experiences provided. It is highly commendable that the pupils engage in a range of field trips to support their learning in the natural environment. The pupils in all classes grow a range of fruit, vegetables and herbs successfully in the school garden; the involvement of parents in supporting this work is notable.

The pupils engage effectively in a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to support their learning. These activities include the *StreamScapes* project, the *Explorers Education Programme*, *Discover Primary Science and Maths* and STEM projects. Maths Week, Science Week, Engineers Week and Space Week are celebrated annually. Commendably, external speakers visit the school to share their expertise in Science with pupils.

The pupils worked very successfully both individually and collaboratively during the lessons observed. Highly respectful interactions were observed in all settings and the pupils' behaviour was exemplary.

The pupils in the focus group interview reported that they use information and communications technologies to conduct research in Science. They noted that the use of science video clips by their teachers supports their learning in Science effectively.

The overall quality of teaching in the science lessons observed was very good. The teachers prepared interesting and stimulating lessons linked to the pupils' experiences. The lessons were well structured and appropriately paced. Each teacher used very good questioning techniques to support and extend learning. There was a good balance between teacher input and pupil involvement in all lessons.

Very good attention was focused on the development of pupils' scientific skills through investigative work and guided discovery, during the lessons observed. The use of science-specific language by both the teachers and pupils was a highly commendable feature of the lessons observed.

A range of effective practices is used to assess the pupils' learning in Science. These should be further developed to include more regular assessment of pupils' learning across all strands of the science curriculum.

All teachers successfully integrate Science with other areas of the curriculum, in particular with English, Mathematics and Geography. The teachers demonstrate commitment to engaging in continuing professional development in Science.

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

The overall quality of school planning for Science is good. The school plan provides good guidance to teachers for the delivery of the science curriculum in a two-year cycle. A very good range of resources is listed in the plan.

To build on this good practice, the investigations and the designing and making activities to be conducted in each strand of the science curriculum should be documented in the plan.

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 | Very good 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 outstanding 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 | Good 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 | Satisfactory 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 | Fair 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 | Weak 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; |