An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Murroe National School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Murroe  
Dunfanaghy  
County Donegal |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number   | 14704P               |

Date of inspection: 07-05-2019
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

Date of inspection  07-05-2019

Inspection activities undertaken
- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Review of relevant documents
- Pupil focus-group interview
- Observation of teaching and learning
- Examination of pupils’ work
- Interaction with pupils
- Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Murroe National School is a co-educational, rural primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. There are two mainstream class teachers and one special education teacher who is shared with another school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school also participates in the Collaborating through Sharing in Education (CASE) programme funded under PEACE IV for primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland and border counties of Ireland.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning in Science is very good overall; pupils demonstrate very high levels of enthusiasm during lessons and can articulate the purpose, sequence and application of their learning to a very high standard.
- Teaching in Science is very good overall; teachers use a wide range of curriculum appropriate teaching methodologies to a very high standard.
- Teachers provide highly commendable support to pupils during lessons.
- The quality of assessment is good; teachers and pupils engage in a suitable range of assessment practices in monitoring continuity and progression.
- The overall quality of planning is good; some aspects of short-term classroom planning practices require review.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- A consistent whole-school approach to the preparation of short-term planning should be agreed and implemented.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning in Science is very good. Pupils demonstrate very high levels of enjoyment and participation during lessons. Pupils’ scientific knowledge is developed very well throughout the school and pupils are highly competent overall in the skills of questioning, observing, predicting, investigating and experimenting, analysing, and recording and communicating. A school-wide focus on the acquisition of terminology in both English and Irish is commendable and pupils demonstrate a very good capacity to use scientific terminology in classroom-based discussions. In enhancing this highly commendable provision further, it would be of benefit to consider the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).
on a more strategic basis for pupils during lessons in Science. Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to engage in designing and making activities. Very good quality samples of pupils’ completed projects are displayed which celebrate pupil achievement in designing sensory bottles, 3-D projects, experiment resources, wind socks, lighthouses, magnet theatres, wind anemometers, string telephones and house insulation projects. During their learning, pupils demonstrated very successful learning in the strand units *Human Life* and *Plant and Animal Life*. Pupils during the focus-group discussion spoke very enthusiastically about their learning in Science and commended the provision of a wide range of activity-based learning opportunities; they also demonstrated a keen awareness of its significance to their lives. They spoke with high levels of enthusiasm about very engaging experiences with visiting experts and worthwhile school outings linking with other primary schools and third level institutions.

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

The overall quality of learning experiences is very good. Pupils in each class engage with the Green Schools Programme; pupils fulfil their various roles with diligence and promote a sense of environmental care and awareness throughout the school. The committee meets regularly and provides minutes for each meeting as well as regular updates on the school website. As a result of pupils’ collaborative efforts, the school has been awarded its sixth green flag. Pupils have regular opportunities to engage in the Discover Primary Science and Maths programme and has received awards for work in this area for seven consecutive years. The internal and external school environment promotes an appreciation of, and active engagement in, Science. Classrooms and communal areas are vibrant and promote a very positive disposition towards Science using outstanding displays of pupils’ previous learning in the subject. Senior pupils engage regularly with digital learning technologies (DLT) as a learning resource in developing presentations of their work and in progressing research skills pertinent to scientific topics and concepts. There are plans to further cultivate the school grounds to facilitate pupils’ exploration of flora and fauna and to enhance the very good work completed to date regarding exploration of off-site habitats.

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers prepare, in advance, a very good range of curriculum appropriate materials to support meaningful and gainful learning experiences. Teachers prepare well-structured, active and appropriately challenging lessons. Very appropriate teaching methodologies, including investigations and experiments, facilitate progressive and purposeful learning in Science. Teachers use a wide range of questioning techniques in eliciting prior knowledge and in affirming and extending good quality pupils’ responses. Very successful use of appropriately extended response time was observed where pupils were provided with opportunities to think more meaningfully about higher-order concepts in formulating higher quality replies. Teachers use classroom discussions in facilitating collaborative approaches to learning for pupils. This results in confident, articulate and highly motivated learners who value the investigative process and the value of errors.

Support for pupils of varying abilities including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is very high. Teachers skilfully support those requiring support and provide appropriate levels of challenge for all ability levels. More focused use of visual references for pupils would further enhance the commendable and consistent provision of, and reference to, learning objectives for pupils.

The overall quality of assessment is good. Teachers use various techniques during lessons to ascertain the quality of pupils’ knowledge and skills including purposeful use of Assessment for
Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL). Pupil voice and opinion is a key feature of teachers’ forward planning. Pupils’ skill development and conceptual application is monitored in both classrooms. Valuable samples of pupils’ work have been collated in individual files and include very good quality annotated drawings of experiments as well as very good quality pupil-devised reports and procedures aligned with the school’s focus on writing genres in English. This is highly commendable practice. All pupils engage with age appropriate self-assessment practices. It would be worth considering the introduction of standardised assessments in Science to provide further information for teachers regarding pupil progress in Science.

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

The overall quality of school planning including SSE is good. The principal with active support from teaching staff works diligently to promote a very positive learning culture in the school. The school plan for Science has been reviewed in recent years and provides a good overview of the two-year cycle to be taught as well as graded subject-specific terminology and an audit of available resources. During the next review cycle it would be of benefit to provide clearer guidance for the multi-grade context of the school. Teachers’ individual long-term plans are of good quality. Short-term planning approaches do not currently align with the requirements of Rule 126 (Revised) of the Rules for National Schools. Going forward, there is need to agree and implement a consistent whole-school approach to the preparation of teachers’ short-term plans. The current focus of SSE on writing genres in English is a commendable and visible component of teaching and learning in both classrooms.
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 Murroe National School wishes to acknowledge the positive findings of this report and the recommendations within. In particular, the board welcomes the fact that the quality of learning, the support for pupils’ learning and the quality of teaching are all rated as very good. We welcome the positive comments about the pupils’ attitude towards Science and how they demonstrate high levels of interest and enthusiasm towards the subject. The board welcomes the recognition of the school’s emphasis on co-curricular initiatives (e.g. Discover Maths and Science Programme and Green School’s Programme) and other projects that enrich the pupils’ learning experiences in Science. We also appreciate that the use of the Digital Learning Framework and technology is noted.

The board of management will work with the staff of the school in implementing the recommendations outlined in this report.

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 will review our whole school approach to the preparation of short-term planning by implementing changes in this area.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong></td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties</td>
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