

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Kinsale N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Knocknabohilly Kinsale Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	14726C

Date of inspection: 03-02-2020



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
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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). 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 inspectors 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	03-02-2020
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

St. Multose is a co-educational primary school in Kinsale. The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Staff comprises of four mainstream class teachers and three special education teachers (SETs), two of whom share a post. There are 108 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes is good; learning would be further enhanced by increased emphasis on the development of pupils' scientific skills.
- High quality learning experiences are provided for pupils; visits from experts, including parents, with scientific expertise, are regular features of practice.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; there is scope to develop language-rich scientific displays in classrooms.
- The quality of assessment is satisfactory; in order to ensure progression in pupils' skills development, assessment practices require review.
- The quality of school planning including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils learning is good; greater guidance in the school plan in relation to both skills development, and assessment would be of further benefit to the overall quality of learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Newly acquired scientific language should be displayed in classrooms to consolidate learning and to support the development and use by pupils of subject-specific language.
- The school should formulate and consistently implement whole-school practices on assessment.
- The school plan for Science should be reviewed to provide greater guidance for teachers on skills attainment as pupils progress through the school.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupils' learning outcomes is good. Pupils were observed to engage with high levels of enthusiasm and motivation in lessons. They demonstrate a curiosity about their environment and about how things work. Their learning encompasses all strands of the curriculum and senior pupils demonstrate a heightened understanding of environmental issues. Infant pupils explore magnets in purposeful play. Through informal investigation, they examine their effects on wood and metal and become aware of the polar properties of magnets. Commendably, Aistear: *the Early Childhood Framework*, is a strong feature in infant and junior classes where pupils benefit from learning about their world through play. Pupils in junior classes demonstrate an awareness of materials in their immediate environment and capably sort and categorise materials as natural and manufactured.

Talk and discussion are strong features of lessons and pupils demonstrate good capacity to describe their learning. Their contributions are welcomed and their existing ideas and knowledge are used as a starting point in lessons. Pupils demonstrated an openness to having their preconceptions challenged or affirmed. Senior pupils benefit from participation in scientific projects and competitions where they present and support a scientific theory. Senior pupils ably described a recent investigation on dog drool and its capacity to kill bacteria. They capably outlined the investigative process, their analysis of results and scientific conclusions reached in this investigation.

Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop the creative and imaginative aspects of the scientific process and to design and build models to support environmental care. They have built bird boxes, participated in making hedgehog homes and during this evaluation, planned and designed the building of models for wind turbines and models of the human respiratory system. These skills of exploring, planning, designing and making enable pupils to apply their learning to practical problem-solving activities and to consolidate their understandings of human functions.

The pupils who participated in the focus-group interview demonstrated confidence in their scientific ability. They recalled with particular enthusiasm their work on simple circuits, reporting that they liked to figure things out and see how things worked. They were eager to describe a recent workshop on forensic science and provided details as to the investigations undertaken as part of this initiative. They spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity provided to them to present their projects both to junior pupils and to their parents as part of the annual science week activities.

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

High quality learning experiences are provided for pupils. The school invites a broad range of experts, including parents, to visit the school to enhance the pupils learning in Science. Guest speakers have shared their knowledge on astronomy, environmental awareness, marine biology, zoology and climatology with pupils. The planned development of the school garden, to provide further opportunities for all pupils to learn in and through this outdoor classroom, is praised. The school's digital strategy is used effectively to support learning in Science. Pupils have access to a range of digital technologies to support them in research and in recording their learning. Some science-based reading material is available to pupils through class libraries and through the school's library supply. Increased access to reading material, including magazines and periodicals is advised.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers successfully employ a range approaches and methodologies in lessons and provide frequent opportunities for pupils to collaborate and to share their ideas. All teachers encourage pupils to articulate their thoughts and to question preconceptions. Higher order questioning is used successfully in lessons to challenge ideas and to encourage pupils to connect their learning across the strands of the curriculum. Pupils' work is displayed in corridors and active learning is captured in photographs using digital technologies. It is recommended that newly acquired language be displayed in all classrooms to consolidate learning and to support the development and use by pupils of scientific language.

All teachers prepare well for lessons and both short-term and long-term planning documents are prepared consistently. Judicious use is made of textbooks which allows for learning to be both topical and relevant.

The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall. Where outcome-based assessment checklists are used, learning is closely monitored and the outcomes of assessment inform and guide future learning experiences for the pupils. It is recommended that the school agree on the key skills to be assessed and implement a strategy to consistently monitor skills attainment as pupils' progress through the school. This whole-school approach will be of particular benefit to teachers' collective practice in relation to teaching and learning in Science.

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

The quality of school planning including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning is good. Work undertaken on the school's digital strategy has impacted positively on the quality of learning in Science. Activities and investigations are recorded and stored on a (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) STEM-specific school tablet. The whole-school plan for Science outlines the topics to be covered at each class level over a two year period, ensuring that a broad and balanced programme of work is provided for pupils. The plan should be reviewed to provide greater guidance to teachers on classroom environments and assessment both of and for learning in Science. While pupils' skills as scientists are developed in lessons, the systemic progression of scientific skills is not outlined in the whole-school plan. Key skills should be documented in the plan and teachers should agree and implement a strategy to consistently assess skills attainment as pupils progress through the school.

The school reports that developments in teaching and learning in Science will form part of the next SSE initiative. It plans to attach specific focus to a strand on a school-wide basis, with a view to monitoring development and progression in learning in tandem with developing an inventory of strand-specific resources. The school demonstrates very good capacity to progress this initiative, under the guidance of the school's co-ordinator for Science.

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;

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 welcomes the inspectors' findings and recommendations. We welcome the acknowledgement and recognition that Kinsale National School provides high quality learning experiences and that pupils engage with high levels of enthusiasm and motivation in lessons.

The school has already taken steps to address some of the recommendations listed and will continue to work on these. This feedback will assist the school in school self-evaluation and whole-school planning. School self-evaluation, improvement and planning are ongoing in Kinsale National School and this report offers the staff the opportunity for future collaborative work in this area.

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 are currently reviewing our whole-school Science plan.

- The progression of scientific skills and whole-school practices on assessment will be clearly outlined in our reviewed whole-school Science plan.
- Newly acquired scientific language is now displayed in each classroom to consolidate learning.
- Science will form part of our next school self-evaluation initiative. As a whole-school, we plan to focus on a specific strand each term. We will monitor the development and progression in learning in tandem with developing an inventory of strand-specific resources.