## Curriculum Evaluation

### Geography

**REPORT**

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<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Mary’s National School</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Arva County Cavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>16316Q</td>
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**Date of Evaluation: 14-10-2016**
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 Geography under the following headings:
1. Quality of pupils’ learning
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.

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.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>14-10-2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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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
Saint Mary’s National School operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. The one hundred and twenty-six pupils enrolled are accommodated across five classrooms.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- Pupils’ learning in Geography is satisfactory; there is scope to align the learning content closer with the curriculum to ensure that all pupils develop a curriculum-appropriate understanding.
- The quality of pupils’ learning experiences is good; all pupils have opportunities to engage in relevant field trips, good use is made of the local environment and visiting speakers support aspects of the Geography programme.
- Teachers’ practice in Geography is satisfactory; there is scope to place additional emphasis on the development of pupils’ geographical skills during lessons.
- The effectiveness of school planning in progressing pupils’ learning is satisfactory; teachers have correctly identified the need to develop the whole-school plan to better inform practice and ensure appropriate progression, breath and balance in pupils’ learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- In their planning for teaching, it is recommended that all teachers adopt the use of curriculum objectives and plan specifically for the development of pupils’ skills.
- During lesson delivery, teachers should provide pupils with on-going opportunities to develop their geographical skills.
- In the whole-school plan, it is recommended that content across the three strands of the curriculum be delineated in a spiral and developmental manner in order to appropriately deepen and systematically extend pupils’ learning.
1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING IN GEOGRAPHY

The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Geography is satisfactory. Pupils demonstrate enjoyment in their lessons and are motivated to learn. Pupils have an informed appreciation of their local environment and demonstrate a commendable sense of personal and community responsibility as custodians of the environment. The school is planning for the development of a school garden and outdoor classroom currently, which would further enrich pupil’s learning in Geography.

Pupils demonstrate the ability to predict and observe. However, they have not yet developed appropriate application of other geographical skills such as investigating and experimenting, analysing, recording and communicating. In some settings, pupils present as having a curriculum-appropriate understanding of aspects of the Geography curriculum. In other settings, there is scope to align the learning content closer with the curriculum to ensure that pupils develop a curriculum-appropriate understanding of Geography. It is recommended that all teachers ensure that the learning content in lessons reflects the appropriate content objectives of the curriculum and that lessons provide pupils with on-going opportunities to develop their geographical skills.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING IN GEOGRAPHY: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The quality of pupils’ learning experiences is good. Classrooms and school corridors promote an appreciation of Geography and include information about environmental awareness and care and maps of the county, Ireland, Europe and the world. The enjoyment of Geography is promoted and the subject is integrated effectively with other aspects of the curriculum. All pupils have opportunities to engage in relevant field trips. Good use is made of the local environment to develop pupils’ learning and visiting speakers support aspects of the Geography programme. Effective use is made of Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework to support infant pupils’ learning in Geography. Some noteworthy assessment-of-learning and assessment-for-learning practices are in place; a whole-school approach to the assessment of learning in Geography should be adopted.

The quality of teachers’ practice in Geography is satisfactory. Lessons are well structured and paced and teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) during lesson delivery. They use pupils’ own ideas as the starting point for lessons and pupils’ contributions are welcomed in order to link learning in Geography to their real-life experiences. In a particular setting, there was commendable differentiation of learning activities and consolidation of learning through the use of ICT. In most settings, lessons were predominately teacher-led with insufficient emphasis being placed on the development of pupils’ geographical skills. It is recommended that teachers place additional emphasis on developing pupils’ skills such as investigating, experimenting, analysing, recording and communicating. In their planning for teaching, it is recommended that all teachers adopt the use of curriculum objectives and plan specifically for the development of pupils’ skills.

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

The effectiveness of school planning in progressing pupils’ learning is satisfactory. Teachers have correctly identified the need to develop the whole-school plan for Geography to better inform
practice and ensure appropriate progression and a certainty of breath and balance in curriculum implementation. In the whole-school plan, it is recommended that content across the three strands of the curriculum be delineated in a spiral and developmental manner to appropriately deepen and systematically extend pupils’ learning in Geography. The identification of project work to be undertaken in classes would further enhance the plan.
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

We were happy that the good quality of learning experiences provided to the children was recognised and that the classroom and corridor displays were complimented. We were delighted that the children were found to have an informed appreciation of their local environment and that they demonstrated a commendable sense of personal and community responsibility as custodians of the environment. We were delighted that the great work that is done under the Aistear Programme in the junior end of the school was commended and that we got credit for some of the noteworthy assessment of learning and assessment for learning practices that we have in place in the school. We were also pleased that the lessons observed were noted as being well structured and paced and that good use was made of ICT and that there was commendable differentiation of learning activities in some settings. Overall, we were delighted that the quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Geography is good.

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

As a school, we take the recommendations on board. The staff will better adopt the use of curriculum objectives in classroom planning and plan specifically for the development of pupils’ skills in each content area and provide opportunities during each lesson for children to develop the particular skill being taught in engaging and active ways.

In our whole school plan, we will delineate the content across the three strands of the curriculum in a spiral and developmental manner in order to appropriately deepen and systematically extend pupils’ learning and ensure appropriate progression, breath and balance in lessons at each level.

We also plan to develop a whole-school approach to the assessment of learning in Geography using some of the noteworthy practices already in place in some settings to ensure a better assessment of pupils’ knowledge and skills.
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 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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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</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>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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