

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Caoimhin Naofa N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Glendalough Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16924Q

Date of inspection: 18-10-2019



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agus Scileanna**
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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 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; a response was not received from the board.

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	18-10-2019
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 Caoimhin Naofa is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop Bishop of Dublin. At the time of the evaluation, there were 130 pupils enrolled from junior infants to sixth class, including one special class for pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There are five mainstream teachers and four special education teachers employed in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- A whole-school culture of collaboration underpins the very high quality planning, teaching and learning in Science in this school.
- The pupils display a positive attitude towards Science and the overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is very good.
- Pupils are very familiar with the flora and fauna of their locality, display an appreciation of the interrelationships of all living things and their environments, and are encouraged to become active agents in conservation for future generations.
- Very high quality and meaningful learning experiences are provided for the pupils in Science.
- While the quality of teaching in Science is of a very high standard, increased time for pupils to explore materials and to question their ideas would further enhance lessons.
- The quality of school planning for Science is very effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to further nurture pupils' inventive and creative capacities, it is recommended that increased opportunities for pupils to engage in enquiry-based learning and free exploration of materials be an integral part of the science programme.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is very good. Pupils display very high levels of interest in Science and are motivated to learn. Pupils are confident in their knowledge of Science and their ability to work as scientists. Most pupils display a very good level of knowledge and understanding across the strands of the science curriculum. They are very familiar with the flora and fauna of their locality, display an appreciation of the interrelationships of all living things and their environments, and are encouraged to become active agents in conservation for future generations. Pupils' scientific skills are very well developed at each class level, with pupils in middle and senior

classes familiar with the concept of a fair test. They are able to use subject-specific language when describing their learning experiences.

In the focus-group interview, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the breadth and balance of learning activities and experiences provided for them in Science. They reported that they enjoy projects, forest school and working together. During lessons observed, pupils demonstrated an ability to pose questions, predict results and test out ideas through experimentation. They were able to recall some designing-and-making activities which required the pupils to work collaboratively in planning, designing, making, testing and evaluating. Extending opportunities for pupils to engage in enquiry-based learning and time for free exploration of materials in science lessons will further nurture pupils' inventive and creative capacities.

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

Very high quality and meaningful learning experiences are provided for the pupils in Science. The enjoyment of Science is promoted and all classrooms host interesting displays, photographs of pupils' work and investigation tables. Pupils are afforded opportunities to work individually and collaboratively, and to learn in a variety of environments both indoors and outdoors. These include gardening activities, field trips, exploration of a range of habitats, forest school and Lego projects. The school participates in a variety of projects and events which have enhanced the pupils' learning experience of Science, including the Discover Primary Science and Maths awards, Junior Entrepreneur Programme, Heritage Week, Climate Action Week and the Green Schools Programme. It is highly praiseworthy that the school encourages and values parental involvement in its provision for Science.

Teaching in Science is of a very high standard. Teachers' short-term and long-term planning is informed by a comprehensive whole-school plan and these are used purposefully to provide pupils with a balanced programme of learning in Science. Teachers model enthusiasm for Science, communicate learning intentions clearly, and manage their classrooms very effectively. They have high expectations for their pupils' learning and facilitate pupils to work collaboratively during pair work and group work activities. A variety of resources and approaches are used to engage pupils. Teachers enable the pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes leading to a broad and balanced understanding of Science. In order to further nurture pupils' inventive and creative capacities, it is advised that greater opportunities for pupils to engage in enquiry-based learning and free exploration of materials be an integral part of teaching the science programme.

Teachers use a variety of effective assessment strategies to assess pupils' knowledge, including, questioning, observing, monitoring of pupils' copybooks, checklists and pupils' self-assessment of their work.

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

The quality of school planning for Science is very effective. A whole-school culture of collaboration underpins the very high quality of planning, teaching and learning in Science in this school. The whole-school plan includes an extensive list of resources and equipment to support teaching and learning in Science. The plan supports the delivery of a broad and balanced programme, and a two-year cycle for implementation of all strands and strand units has been devised.

Commendably, the school is committed to ongoing improvement in the quality of provision for Science with plans underway to further develop aspects of the science programme including additional outdoor discovery areas, coding activities and digital portfolios. Teachers demonstrate a

keen awareness of the importance of Science, Technology and Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and are planning to further enhance and develop provision 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.

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;