**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
*Department of Education and Skills*

**Curriculum Evaluation**

**REPORT**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta na gCluainte</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Clonmany</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Donegal</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17180W</td>
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**Date of inspection: 14-03-2019**
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.
SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Náisiúnta na gCluainte is a co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry. The school has four mainstream class teachers, one full-time special education teacher and one part-time special education teacher. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), an action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. It also receives support from the School Completion Programme (SCP). Currently there are 110 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Science is good; pupils demonstrate commendable levels of interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm in their learning.
• The quality of support for pupils’ learning is very good; purposeful collaborative group work is effectively supported throughout the school.
• The quality of teaching overall is of a very high standard; teachers prepare for appropriately challenging lessons.
• The quality of assessment is satisfactory; pupils are not enabled to reflect constructively on their own learning.
• The quality of whole-school planning including school self-evaluation (SSE) is good; the whole-school plan does not adequately provide for the teaching of skills and concepts of the Science curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• The school should agree and implement a whole-school approach for assessing and recording pupils’ progress in Science and enable them to reflect constructively on their own learning using self and peer-assessment practices.
• The school plan should detail the whole-school approach to the progressive development of the teaching of skills and concepts of the Science curriculum.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Science is good. Pupils’ enjoyment in learning in the subject is evident and they demonstrate commendable levels of interest, enthusiasm and engagement in their learning. The pupils articulate with confidence their learning as outlined in teachers’ monthly progress reports. In the junior classes, pupils’ scientific skills have been developed and they demonstrate confidence and competence in applying their skills to open-ended activities including a Make and Design task. Further attention to the incremental development of pupils’ scientific skills in other strands would enhance learning. Science is integrated very effectively across the curriculum to provide pupils with a cohesive, integrated learning experience that also impacts positively on their learning in numeracy and literacy. The pupils in the senior classes have opportunities to share their learning with the parent body and whole school community during planned interactions. Pupils enjoy frequent opportunities to be active in their learning and to work collaboratively with other pupils. Further opportunities to engage in open-ended collaborative investigations that take due regard of their own observations, prior knowledge and interests would benefit the pupils in their learning.

Pupil responses in the focus-group discussion indicated that pupils’ enthusiasm for Science is rooted in positive, regular experiences in Science. They particularly enjoyed the creativity associated with doing experiments and the importance of the concept of the fair test.

Engagement in co-curricular initiatives such as the Green Schools Programme and their involvement with visiting specialists supports pupils’ environmental awareness and scientific knowledge and facilitates them in making meaningful connections with life-long learning. The planned exploration of local habitats will facilitate the exploration of flora and fauna of a variety of contrasting habitats.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The quality of support for pupils’ learning is very good. Attractive, stimulating learning environments are provided with useful displays in classrooms. The pupils have very good access to a wide range of materials for experimental work in the strands of Living things, Materials and Environmental awareness and care. Pupils in the middle classes were able to explore which material was the best insulator and pupils in the junior classes were encouraged to investigate the parts of a flower very successfully.

Commendably, pupils are enabled to work as scientists. Information and communications technology is successfully used to provide images, presentations and quizzes that scaffold, enhance and extend learner experiences. The internal and external school environment promotes an appreciation of, and engagement in, Science.

Teaching in Science is of a very high standard. Teachers’ planning for lessons and preparation for learning activities are of a very good quality. Their delivery of very well-structured, activity based, challenging lessons is notable. Appropriate teaching methodologies including investigations and questioning facilitate purposeful and progressive learning in Science.
The quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teachers use observation, questioning, teacher designed tasks, quizzes and pupils’ copybooks to assess pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the subject. There is a need to develop a more consistent whole-school approach to assess pupils’ work and to plan for pupils’ future learning in Science. To support continuity and progressions, pupils should be enabled to reflect constructively on their own learning and use self and peer-assessment to further their own learning.

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

The quality of whole-school planning for Science is good. The quality of individual teacher’s planning is commendable and clearly reflects the whole school plan. The principal works diligently to promote a learning culture in the school with a particular emphasis on promoting Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The leadership team has been effective in fostering collaboration between teachers to enable the sharing of professional knowledge regarding Science. As part of the school improvement process, school staff reviewed the whole school plan for Science and have incorporated initiatives in Science as part of their DEIS plan. The revised cyclical two-year plan covers all strands and strand units to guide teaching in the multi-grade classrooms of the school. It also includes an audit of current resources, specific terminology to be taught at each class level and a limited number of famous scientists to be studied. Key skills in Science are identified in the plan; however, the plan does not adequately provide for the teaching of skills and concepts of the Science curriculum. The school is advised to carry out and include a local environmental audit and identify areas in the locality for pupils to explore and investigate on an incremental basis.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

We the Board of Management of Cloontagh N.S. would like to acknowledge this report and are pleased at the recognition of the school’s many strengths and particularly its successes in the area of Science.

We also are delighted at the acknowledgement of the high standard of overall teaching and learning in the school as well as the effective collaboration between staff and pupils.

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

The assessment and recording of pupils’ progress in Science will be undertaken following discussion and evaluation by teachers and pupils in this subject area. It is planned to implement a progressive programme from Infants to 6th class which will acknowledge and develop the children’s learning and progress in the area of Science. Examples that may be used are rubrics, self-assessment strategies, peer assessment strategies, KWL charts, SALT and See-saw.

The teaching of skills and concepts will be reviewed at class and whole school level by all teachers. This will be a developing approach based on the ability of the class and this will be incorporated into the school plan.

An environmental audit has been carried out and each class will study and investigate a local habitat on a bi-annual basis.
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.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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><strong>Good</strong> 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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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</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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<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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><strong>Weak</strong> 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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