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

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Science**

**REPORT**

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Cholmcille</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>An Caisleán Géarr</td>
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<td>Gaillimh</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17221K</td>
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**Date of inspection: 22-11-2017**
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 of the school 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.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection | 22-11-2017
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Inspection activities undertaken | Examination of pupils’ work
• Discussion with principal and teachers | • Interaction with pupils
• Review of relevant documents | • Feedback to principal and teachers
• Observation of teaching and learning

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Náisiúnta Cholmcille is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Galway. The school has four mainstream class teachers, four special education teachers and a special class for pupils with autistic-spectrum disorders. The school also has the services of a shared home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme. Two of the teachers observed during the inspection were participating in Droichead, the professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), an action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. There were 91 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• The overall quality of the learner experiences and teachers’ practice observed during the inspection was good.
• Teachers’ knowledge and classroom management skills were good or very good in all of the lessons observed; one element of good practice implemented particularly well by all teachers was the explicit teaching and displaying of key vocabulary.
• The school is actively developing its immediate environs as a resource for learning in Science.
• The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Science was satisfactory.
• There was evidence of gaps in pupils’ achievement in certain areas, and this was most evident with regard to the two skills sections of the curriculum: Working Scientifically, and Designing and Making.
• The overall quality of whole-school curriculum planning for Science was good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• In their collective and individual practice teachers should ensure that they are familiar with the objectives of the skills sections of the curriculum and the type of learner experiences that pupils need in order to achieve these objectives.
• The school should ensure that pupils’ learning in Science is recorded and assessed over the course of the school year and as pupils move from one class to the next.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Science was satisfactory. Pupils’ engagement, motivation and enjoyment were good or very good in all of the lessons observed. In most of the classrooms visited, pupils’ ability to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the Primary School Curriculum was satisfactory. In some instances, pupils demonstrated a good understanding of topics on which they had worked recently. In other cases, it was evident from pupils’ responses to questioning and from samples of pupils’ work in Science that they had yet to achieve particular curriculum objectives for previous class levels. This was most evident with regard to the two skills sections of the curriculum: Working Scientifically, and Designing and Making.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The overall quality of the learner experiences and teachers’ practice observed during the inspection was good. Teachers’ knowledge and classroom management skills were good or very good in all of the lessons observed. Teachers’ preparation for these lessons was very good and the teaching approaches used were good overall. Most of the lessons were well structured and there was effective use of suitable resources and activities that allowed pupils to work both independently and collaboratively in a productive manner.

One element of good practice that was implemented particularly well by all teachers was the explicit teaching and displaying of key vocabulary. Some teachers also showed great skill in enabling pupils to use the target vocabulary independently and fluently. In all of the classrooms visited, there were relevant displays to support pupils’ learning in Science.

In their collective practice, teachers should give greater consideration to what pupils are expected to achieve in the two skills sections of the curriculum: Working Scientifically, and Designing and Making. All teachers should become familiar with the objectives in these sections of the curriculum and the type of learner experiences that pupils need in order to achieve these objectives.

The overall quality of assessment in Science was satisfactory. The use of assessment in the lessons observed ranged from very good to satisfactory. The school should ensure that pupils’ learning in the subject is recorded and assessed over the course of the school year and as pupils move from one class to the next.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of management of resources for Science was very good. At the time of the inspection the school was actively developing the school grounds as a resource for teaching and learning. Funding had been sourced locally for the development of an outdoor classroom to include elements such as a pond, a bug hotel and bird boxes with cameras.

The school participates in An Taisce’s Green Schools programme and has already been awarded seven green flags for work on a range of themes that are particularly relevant to the Environmental Awareness and Care strand of the Science curriculum. The school also participates in a wide range of other local and national initiatives that support learning in Science.
The overall quality of whole-school curriculum planning for Science was good. The school’s current three-year development plan identifies as a priority the review of Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), of which Science is a part. As part of this review the outline of what is to be covered at each class level should be amended to include what pupils will learn from the Working Scientifically, and Designing and Making sections of the curriculum. There should also be reference to what pupils will experience and learn from activities in the school grounds and from Science initiatives and partnerships in which the school expects to have an ongoing involvement.

4. CHILD PROTECTION
The following aspects of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools were checked during the evaluation:

1. Teachers’ access to a copy of the school’s Child Protection policy
2. The prominent display of the name of Designated Liaison Person near the main entrance

The school was fully compliant with both aspects.
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 Castlegar NS wishes to acknowledge the affirmations and recommendations of the Inspectorate regarding the delivery of the Science Curriculum in the school. The report provides us with a clear roadmap for improvement which will further enhance learner outcomes. We welcome in particular the positive comments regarding learner experiences, teachers’ practice and teachers’ knowledge.

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 school will implement the recommendations with the support of the board of management. We will focus specifically on developing the two skills sections of the Science Curriculum: *Working Scientifically* and *Designing and Making*. Our school plan will be further developed to include specific *Designing and Making* activities at each class level to complement each strand of the Science Curriculum.
- Pupils will develop a notebook that will detail their work and experiments conducted from 3rd class, to begin in September 2018. This will ensure progress is tracked and evidence is available to demonstrate the variety of investigations conducted by the children as they move from class to class.
- Assessment of Science is currently being reviewed by staff with a view to using ICT as a medium for tracking and recording progress across the strands and development in the key 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 of the school’s provision of each area.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td><strong>Very Good</strong></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 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><strong>Good</strong></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><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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><strong>Fair</strong></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><strong>Weak</strong></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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