An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Curriculum Evaluation  
Geography  

REPORT  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>S N Muire Is Gearard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>St. Mary’s &amp; St. Gerard’s National School Enniskerry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17223O</td>
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Date of inspection: 11-04-2019
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 inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in Geography 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>10-04-2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Scoil Naomh Muire Is Gearard is a co-educational primary school located in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school has eight mainstream class teachers and three special education teachers, one of whom is shared with another school. At the time of the evaluation, there were 215 pupils enrolled in the school.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**

- Pupils’ overall attainment in Geography is of a very high standard; progression of pupils’ geographical investigation skills and knowledge from class level to class level is evident.
- The school’s commitment to environmental awareness is of an exceptionally high standard; notable emphasis is placed upon developing pupils’ sense of personal and community responsibility as custodians of the earth.
- The learning experiences of the pupils in Geography are of a very high quality with highly commendable use made of the locality and original resources to support pupils’ learning experiences.
- Teaching in Geography is of a notable quality; teachers displayed very good subject knowledge and used an effective range of methodologies during lessons observed; scope exists to develop the range of methods used to record and assess pupils’ learning.
- Leadership and management for Geography is highly commendable with excellent levels of subject knowledge evident in the school community.
- School planning for Geography is good; scope for development exists in making key decisions about places to be studied in depth, at all class levels.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that the whole school plan for Geography be further progressed to identify agreed areas for in depth study at each class level; the plan should also extend the methods for recording and assessing pupil learning in Geography.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

- Pupils’ overall attainment in Geography is of a very high standard and pupils present as motivated, enthusiastic learners who enjoy their learning in Geography. During the focus group interview, pupils displayed very positive attitudes to their learning in Geography and demonstrated high levels of understanding of the relevance of Geography to their lives. Pupils in all settings have developed a range of skills in Geography; they can question, predict, record and communicate their findings. Progression of pupils’ geographical investigation skills and knowledge from class level to class level is evident. While pupils have access to quality maps, consideration should be given to developing pupils’ maps, globes and graphical skills on a progressive basis, from class level to class level.

- Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge of and positive attitudes towards their own local environment. They were able to describe human and natural features of their local area, their county, Ireland and European and International locations. In particular, pupils were able to describe in detail and discuss the rocks and soils of the locality. Pupils also have a good knowledge of weather and climate. All pupils are provided with opportunities to learn about the local environment. As a means of deepening their learning and understanding of the locality, it is recommended that key decisions be made to identify agreed areas for in depth study at each class level.

- Pupils undertake high quality projects and use digital technology skilfully to research and display their new learning to a variety of audiences. In the majority of settings, pupils recall their learning with ease using quality subject specific geographical language. Copybooks, projects and displays are used to record pupil learning. It is recommended that pupils should be facilitated to develop a wider range of methods of recording their learning in all topics and provided with regular opportunities to recall and discuss prior learning in Geography.

- Through participation in the Green Schools and Eco-Rangers initiatives all pupils are enabled to develop personal and community responsibility as custodians of the earth. The school has been assessed for their eighth Green Flag award in recognition of the school’s current and historic commitment to the Environmental awareness and care strand of the Geography curriculum. Pupils show an informed appreciation of their local environment and the environments they have studied and show commitment to sustainable lifestyles. The school has developed a biodiversity map, and this has been used by the Biodiversity Data Centre to inform other schools in developing pollinator plans for their environment.

- Pupils have a sense of empathy with people from diverse environments and an understanding of human interdependence. Senior pupils take part in Irish Aid workshops annually as part of the Trade and development issues strand of the Geography curriculum.

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

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in Geography is very good. Resources and displays in classrooms and corridors support and reinforce learning in Geography very effectively. Regular fieldtrips to the local bog land, woodland and science centre are organised to support pupils’ learning; guest speakers also visit the school to share their knowledge and expertise. The outdoor spaces are maximised for the benefit of pupils’ learning and include areas for planting and observing. Pupils in the focus group interview
indicated that they find investigations, fieldtrips, drawing, project work, quizzes, games, and making podcasts both helpful and enjoyable methods of learning in Geography.

- Teachers employ age-appropriate methodologies to create informative and worthwhile lessons. Pupils have opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. Very good use of digital technology was observed during the evaluation; this included high-quality video clips, photographs, recording pupil learning and displaying pupil learning. While there is very good access to maps in all settings, the learning experiences provided should include additional opportunities for pupils to engage in more complex mapping concepts to include reading and constructing maps.

- Overall, teaching in Geography is of a very high quality. All teachers prepare short-term and long-term plans for teaching and learning in Geography. Where very effective plans are in use, they guide the teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum; they also guide the teaching of skills and geographical language and facilitate recall and review of learning.

- Very good preparation for the teaching of lessons observed during the evaluation was carried out in all classes. Teachers prepared interesting lessons with judicious use made of textbooks, original resources and carefully planned activities and investigations. All teachers demonstrate very good levels of classroom management. Where exemplary practice was observed, lessons were underpinned by very positive classroom interactions, skilful questioning and well managed use of resources. Exemplary practice was also characterised by a commendable variety of group, pair and individual tasks, and clear matching of activities to identified pupil learning outcomes.

- Teachers integrate lesson content in Geography successfully with other curriculum areas, including Science, Physical Education, Visual Arts, Social Personal and Health Education, and History. Pupils are enabled to make meaningful links between lesson material and their learning in these other curriculum areas. Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is successfully utilised in the infant classes to integrate pupils’ learning in Geography.

- The overall quality of assessment is good. Copybooks are maintained to a very high standard in most settings. Portfolios, concept maps, checking of prior knowledge are also used to assess pupil learning. The principal has reported that the school is in the process of developing a formative assessment approach in Geography.

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

- The overall quality of school planning for Geography is good. Leadership for the teaching of Geography is very good. A whole school plan is in place for Geography covering all three strands. Further development of the plan should include decisions to identify specific places to be investigated by pupils from junior infants to 6th class.

- The plan should also ensure that areas chosen for study in middle and senior classes include the local environment, a contrasting place in Ireland a European location and a non-European area. Guidance should also be included in the plan to teachers about the range of approaches used to record and assess pupil learning in Geography.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Very good</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory</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</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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