Curriculum Evaluation
Geography

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Mhuire Muigheo</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Crettyard  
Carlow  
Co Carlow |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 17271C |

Date of inspection: 06-02-2019
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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in [Subject] 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  06-02-2019

Inspection activities undertaken

- 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
Scoil Mhuire Muigheo is a rural, two-teacher, co-educational primary school in County Laois. The school is situated near the town of Carlow and is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. Enrolment trends in the school have remained constant over the past few years. There were 40 pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation and attendance rates were high. A special education teacher (SET), based in another school in the locality, provides additional support for children with special educational needs in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching in Geography is good.
- While the overall quality of pupils’ learning in Geography is good, there is scope to enrich pupils’ learning experiences by providing more opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate the local environment.
- Teachers use a variety of methods to assess pupils’ learning progress in Geography.
- The effectiveness of whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) and teacher’s planning is adequate and does not reflect current practice or support continuity and progression in pupils’ learning throughout the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school plan should be reviewed collaboratively to give a clear sense of purpose and direction to the overall implementation of the Geography curriculum in the school by providing an outline of the distinctive content, skills and concepts to be developed at each class level.
- The school plan should outline aspects of the local environment selected to develop pupils’ geographical skills and investigative techniques.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Geography is good. Pupils display positive attitudes towards the subject and demonstrate an interest in learning a range of geographical concepts. Classroom environments, IT resources and displays of pupils’ work effectively support and reinforce pupils’ learning. During the focus group discussion, pupils reported that they enjoy learning about maps and the physical features of Ireland and their local environment. Pupils engage in project work and debates, both individually and collaboratively. Pupils have a good sense of place and community and they can describe human and natural features in their locality successfully. They are familiar with concepts presented in Environmental Awareness and Care and they have participated in a range of whole-school projects on environmental awareness. While pupils engage in activities in the local environment, they would benefit from more frequent opportunities to participate in fieldwork. This would enable them to better appreciate the features and characteristics of the locality and to allow them to extend their understanding of the geographical concepts that they encounter in the classroom.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers demonstrate an interest in the subject and stimulate pupils’ curiosity about the world. Teachers use a variety of approaches and methodologies to motivate the pupils and to provide them with rich learning experiences. An integrated approach is used to implement the Geography curriculum throughout the school. In the junior classes, theme teaching is used through the implementation of Aistear, The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. In the senior classes, Geography is integrated with other subjects such as English, History and Science and pupils experience differentiated learning activities to stimulate their interest. Pupils have opportunities to meet people from the local community and to interview them about their roles. Pupils use a wide variety of resources in Geography lessons including photographs, maps, projects completed by former pupils and IT resources. Careful collaborative planning should be developed to ensure that the role and distinctive contribution of the content, skills and concepts of the Geography curriculum are realised throughout the school. There is appropriate provision for assessment in Geography. Teachers check on pupils’ understanding of content regularly and there is frequent revision of concepts to consolidate learning. Pupils’ progress is assessed through teacher-designed tasks, tests, quizzes, samples of pupils’ work in copy books, and collaborative projects. There is scope to extend assessment procedures to include methods for recording pupils’ learning outcomes in Geography as they progress through the school.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
Curriculum planning for Geography is adequate. While the whole school plan for Geography provides an outline of the curriculum to be implemented, it does not reflect current practice. There is a need to review the plan to provide greater clarity on the geographical content, skills and concepts to be taught at each class level. The plan should also provide guidance for teachers on how to differentiate the curriculum for the multi-grade context of the school. The school plan should provide for a broad range of local studies at all class levels and outline opportunities to link elements of local studies to national and wider contexts. While teachers prepare planning documents to support their work, they should satisfy themselves that they comply with Rule 126 for National Schools regarding the presentation of planning documents. There is scope to improve the effectiveness of these plans to support the continuity and progression of pupils’ learning throughout the school.
**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>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 <strong>very good</strong> 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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