Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Baile Na hInse</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Ballinahinch</td>
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<td>Birdhill</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Tipperary</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17296S</td>
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Date of inspection: 22-05-2019
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 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.

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning</strong></td>
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<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
Ballinahinch National School is a rural co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. At the time of this evaluation, there were five mainstream class teachers and two special education teachers (SETs) with a pupil enrolment of 123.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- Learning is good, with some examples of innovative practice observed.
- The pupils enjoy their learning in Science and display a strong sense of ownership of their work.
- The overall quality of observed teaching was good; however, whole-school approaches are not implemented uniformly.
- Teachers’ individual planning is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good.
- School planning is good and a review of the school plan for Science has resulted in very effective practice in some classes.
- Assessment is satisfactory overall; the way in which assessment of pupils’ prior learning is used to inform teachers’ planning varies from fair to very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Individual teachers should ensure that their practice is in accordance with the school plan for Science.
- Regular opportunities should be provided for teachers to plan collaboratively and to share good practice in order to further enhance teaching and learning.
- Teachers should engage with pupils’ prior skills and understanding in science lessons and activities.
- Self-assessment and peer assessment should form part of the learner experience in all classes.
1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of learning is good. Pupils enjoy learning Science and are clearly motivated to learn.

Learning was more successful in the settings where teachers’ planning and classroom organisation were of a high standard. Group teaching was observed in these settings and pupil-led discussion was facilitated effectively. The pupils engaged in open-ended investigations. In some of the lessons observed, the concept of ‘safe space’ was used to stimulate open-ended questioning by pupils. This practice contributes strongly to the pupils having a sense of ownership of their learning.

The pupils are very aware of the importance of their local environment. The pupils had recently planted a wildflower area in the school grounds in order to develop an understanding of biodiversity, which is the theme of the school’s involvement in the Green Schools Programme. The senior classes participated in robotics workshops. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the concept of a fair test.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The overall quality of teaching is good. Examples of very good practice were observed. In these cases, teachers’ practice included the discrete teaching of scientific language, the development of investigation skills, the use of procedural writing and the assessment of pupils’ understanding at the beginning of the lesson. These very good practices should form part of the teaching approaches in all classrooms. Management should provide regular opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively and share good practice in order to improve teaching and learning in Science.

The majority of teachers use group work and station teaching very effectively. Pupils were well supported where these strategies were used. Teachers prepare well for Science lessons and organise the necessary resources. Some classes make very good use of information and communication technologies (ICT).

The quality of teachers’ individual planning varies from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have collaborated effectively on a two-year school plan for Science that is in accordance with the Primary School Curriculum (1999). Very positive learning experiences were observed where teachers based their individual planning on the school plan. However, not all of the lessons observed were planned in accordance with the school plan. Some lessons did not fully address the needs of the pupils in terms of content and teaching approaches.

The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. The way in which the assessment of pupils’ prior learning was used to inform teachers’ planning varied from fair to very good. Teachers’ planning resulted in relevant learning experiences for the pupils when it was informed by an assessment of the pupils’ prior knowledge. Self-assessment and peer assessment were observed in a small number of settings only and should be used, as appropriate, in all classrooms. Teachers should engage with pupils’ prior skills and understanding in all lessons and activities.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of school planning is good. Teachers have collaborated in a review of the
school plan for Science and advanced innovative practice in some classes. Management is developing a collaborative working culture in the school.

The school has not fully addressed the role of assessment in relation to Science, albeit that some examples of peer assessment and group assessment were observed which supported the understanding of concepts and the development of subject-specific language. Management should organise more collaborative opportunities for teachers to address the role of assessment and use the process of school self-evaluation (SSE) to focus progress in this area.

The management of resources was good. ICT was used effectively to support lessons. Both indoor and outdoor learning environments were used and the pupils also participated in workshops in other locations.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

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

Practice of individual teachers will be reviewed with reference to the school plan for Science to ensure that practice in all classes is in accordance with the “very effective practice”, as observed in relation to “some classes” in the inspection report.

As part of overall school planning, opportunity will be provided to teachers to share good practice and develop and implement a whole-school approach.

Going forward, teachers will seek to engage more fully with pupils’ prior skills and understanding in science lessons and in science activities.

In school planning, teachers will examine how self-assessment and peer assessment can be applied more fully as part of the learner experience in all classes.
**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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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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>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 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>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.</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>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.</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>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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