An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Curriculum Evaluation  
Science  

REPORT  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Lisheenkyle  
County Galway |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number   | 17771W |

Date of inspection: 02-04-2019
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 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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<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>02-04-2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>- Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>- Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>- Interaction with pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Observation of teaching and learning</td>
<td>- Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire is a rural, co-educational primary school situated in the parish of Athenry, County Galway. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. Current teacher staffing includes an administrative principal, nine mainstream teachers and eleven special education teachers (SETs), one of whom is shared with another school. There are also ten special needs assistants (SNAs), six of whom are full-time. At the time of the evaluation, there were 234 pupils enrolled.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Science is very good.
- The quality of learner experiences is very good; there is exemplary engagement with co-curricular initiatives.
- The quality of teaching is very good; very successful practice was observed in the teaching of key scientific vocabulary and the development of pupils’ collaborative skills.
- There is effective assessment of Science overall; there is scope to develop a whole-school approach to assessment.
- School planning to progress pupils’ learning is effective.
- The use of resources to enhance the teaching and learning of Science is very good overall; educationally beneficial discovery and nature tables are maintained in some classrooms.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Whole-school approaches to the assessment and recording of pupils’ progress in Science should be agreed and implemented.
- The learning environment in all classrooms should include a discovery or nature table, to further stimulate pupils’ interest in the subject.

**DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING**

The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Science is very good. Most pupils demonstrate very good knowledge across each of the strands of the curriculum and can discuss their learning confidently using appropriate scientific vocabulary. Pupils’ engagement in learning is of a very high standard with notable levels of pupil enjoyment and motivation evident in each classroom.

Pupils’ scientific skills are very well developed at each class level. From junior infants to sixth class, pupils have regular opportunities to work scientifically and to engage in designing and making.
Predicting, questioning, measuring and recording, as well as interpreting results, are an integral part of the experiments conducted by the pupils.

Particularly good learner outcomes were observed in the strand Living Things. It is evident that the whole-school approaches to health promotion are being used effectively to support learning in this strand. The use of the outdoor classroom, in the adjacent woodland, and the school garden supports the strand unit Plants and Animals very effectively.

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

The pupils’ learning experiences are of a very high quality. All pupils engage in meaningful and challenging learning experiences to develop their scientific skills. In all lessons observed, the pupils engaged very successfully in collaborative activities. The pupils were given valuable opportunities to use a range of materials in their group tasks and the applications of Science in real-life situations were explored effectively.

Pupils’ learning is celebrated using a variety of media, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) displays, project work, and digital recordings. The pupils’ learner experiences are further enhanced through their engagement with a range of co-curricular activities, including Discover Primary Science and Maths, Green Schools, and Galway Science and Technology Festival, as well as through visits to the local Teagasc Campus and to Brigit’s Garden.

In focus-group discussion, the pupils displayed very positive attitudes to their learning. They reported that they benefit from visits from an impressive range of experts and guest speakers. They also reported enjoying their experiences during the Science week, Space week and Engineering week events, which run on an annual basis in the school.

The quality of teaching in Science is very good. Teachers plan effectively using intended learner outcomes to direct their lessons. They structure their lessons skilfully to achieve a good balance between teacher input and purposeful pupil engagement. Pupils’ ideas and prior knowledge were the starting point for most of the lessons observed. All teachers use high-quality questioning techniques to support and extend pupils’ learning. Very successful practice was observed in the teaching of key scientific vocabulary.

All teachers demonstrated very successful classroom management skills and pupils’ behaviour was excellent during the evaluation. Interactions with and between pupils were highly respectful.

Digital technologies are used effectively in all classrooms to record and celebrate the pupils’ learning in Science. Commendable use of a variety of apps, as well as of the Scoilnet.ie website, for research and recording by the pupils, was observed in a few classrooms.

The overall quality of assessment in Science is good. Pupils’ written work is monitored and corrected regularly and useful written feedback is provided to encourage pupils in their learning. A range of assessment strategies is used to enable pupils to reflect on their learning in the subject, including concept maps, portfolios, teacher-designed tests, photographs, videos, and checklists. There is scope, nevertheless, to improve the assessment of Science. It is recommended that whole-school approaches to the assessment and recording of pupils’ progress in Science be agreed and implemented.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

Whole-school curriculum planning for Science is good. It provides guidance for teachers in their individual planning. To further enhance consistent practice across the school, the learner experiences and key scientific vocabulary for each class level should be included in the school plan, as well as agreed whole-school approaches to the assessment and recording of pupils’ progress.

The management of resources is very good. The school plan includes an extensive list of resources and equipment to support teaching and learning in Science. These resources are used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Educationally beneficial discovery and nature tables are maintained in some classrooms. A discovery or nature table should be established in each classroom to further stimulate pupils’ interest in Science.
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 Lisheenkyle National School accepts the findings of the Curriculum Evaluation Inspection in Science. We found the affirmation of the curricular evaluation report to be a positive endorsement, and the report confirms the many good practices in existence in our school.

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 ISM team have agreed that the science plan will be amended to include key specific vocabulary for each class. Each class teacher is to ensure that there is a nature/discovery table in their classroom.
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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<tr>
<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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