Curriculum Evaluation

Science

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Ursáile Naofa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Two Mile House Naas Co Kildare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17968S</td>
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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 learning 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

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>07-02-2017</th>
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<tr>
<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

An Evaluation of Science was undertaken in Scoil Ursail Naofa, Two Mile House, Co Kildare. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interactions with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and teachers, a pupil focus group discussion, and a review of a selection of school documents and assessment data. Scoil Ursail Naofa is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. Currently there are 10 mainstream classrooms catering for infants to 6th class.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The pupils display a positive attitude towards Science and the overall quality of their learning is very good.
- While pupils are provided with a good range of learning experiences, there is a need for more opportunities for them to engage in open-ended investigations.
- The teachers provide a variety of effective lessons to support pupils’ learning in Science.
- The whole-school plan for Science provides very good guidance to teachers.
- In order to fully achieve continuity and progression in all strands, teachers’ short-term planning requires review.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers’ short-term planning should document specific learning outcomes, the development of scientific skills and include subject-specific vocabulary as appropriate.
- Pupils should be provided with more opportunities to engage in open-ended investigations to develop a scientific approach to problem-solving.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING IN SCIENCE

Overall the quality of pupils’ learning in Science is very good. Pupils enjoy learning and are motivated to learn. They were able to recall previous lessons articulately and confidently. They displayed knowledge and understanding in line with the objectives set out in the curriculum. In discussion, pupils reported that they find Science interesting and that they prefer the lessons with experiments rather than reading from the textbook. Some pupils had a good understanding of fair testing and could apply this to different contexts. Pupils should be provided with more opportunities to engage in open-ended investigations that encourage pupils to pose their own questions and to test out their own ideas through a scientific approach to problem-solving.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING IN SCIENCE: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The school supports pupils’ learning in Science effectively. Pupils are afforded opportunities to engage in a good range of science activities. Classrooms host a variety of displays, investigation tables, photographs and projects. Pupils are provided with opportunities to take part in interesting learning experiences inside and outside the school environment including field trips, nature walks and workshops provided by visiting speakers. Very good emphasis is placed on the environmental awareness and care strand and this is reflected in the schools’ successful involvement in the Green Schools Programme and classroom lessons to further consolidate this work. The school encourages parental involvement in the science curriculum, this is characterised by participation in the Green Schools Programme, facilitating workshops and talks during engineering week and a whole-school science day.

Teaching in Science is good, overall. In lessons observed, the teachers’ practice ranged from satisfactory to very good. Most teachers made good use of resources and they questioned pupils effectively. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in activities and experiments that help pupils learn a pre-determined idea or procedure. While group work was a feature of most lessons, it was predominantly teacher directed. Teachers should now provide more opportunities to increase pupil participation levels in purposeful pupil-led talk and discussion and pupil-led open investigations. Most teachers are currently engaging with an appropriate variety of assessment strategies including, questioning, concept maps and check lists. In order to ensure continuity and progression from class to class, the school should develop consistent systems to record and share pupils’ progress in Science and to use this assessment data to inform teaching and learning.

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

The quality of planning for Science is good. The whole-school plan provides very good guidance to teachers on delivering the science programme to all classes. The plan includes a clear programme of work for all classes, sample lessons plans, templates for nature walks and trails in the locality and lists of resources available to all teachers. All teachers prepare long and short-term plans. Some teachers tend to over-rely on textbooks to inform their planning. In order to achieve continuity and progression throughout the whole-school, teachers short-term planning should be based on the curriculum
objectives and should follow the whole-school plan. While some teachers plan on a monthly basis, all teachers should now plan fortnightly in order to better support the documentation of specific learning outcomes, the development of scientific skills and to include subject specific vocabulary as appropriate.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</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 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><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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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Two Mile House N.S. accept the findings of the Curriculum Evaluation Inspection in Science. The inspection was supportive of the teaching and learning in our school. We found the affirmation of the curriculum evaluation a positive endorsement and the report confirms many of the good practices in existence in the school. The staff’s experience of the evaluation ranged from a feeling of it being a learning experience, all be it a stressful one for some, to it being a positive experience.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The actions taken thus far are as follows:

1. The provision of a new Wildlife Way to explore biodiverse habitats in the school grounds - this work is being undertaken with the help of volunteer parents, teachers and children.
2. Teachers’ short term planning has been adjusted as advised.
3. The use of open ended investigation as a methodology is now a priority.
4. We aim to ensure that the recommendations are addressed during this and subsequent school years.