### Curriculum Evaluation

#### Geography

**REPORT**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Scoil Áine Cailini</th>
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<td>All Saints Drive</td>
<td>Raheny</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dublin 5</td>
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<td>D05 PD34</td>
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<td>Roll number</td>
<td>17977T</td>
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**Date of inspection:** 18-01-2018
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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection: 18-01-2018

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 Áine Cailíní is an all-girls’ senior primary school located in Raheny, Dublin 5. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. School staffing includes fourteen mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers. There are 352 pupils enrolled currently.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good; pupils present as motivated, enthusiastic learners who enjoy their learning in Geography.
- While there was evidence of progressive learning in mapping skills in a few classrooms, there is an overall lack of clarity with regard to how these skills are developed throughout the school.
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in the subject is very good and, in particular, the project work observed during the evaluation was of a very high standard.
- The overall quality of teaching in Geography is very good; teachers provide interesting learning opportunities which enable pupils to demonstrate an enquiring and open-minded attitude to the world around them.
- There is potential to make more in-depth use of pupils’ enquiry questions as the basis for ongoing geographical investigations.
- Assessment practices are very well developed and pupils are provided with comprehensive information on their understanding and knowledge of topics; further attention should be paid to the assessment of pupils’ skill and concept development.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- A consistent emphasis should be placed on the development of pupils’ mapping skills as they progress through the school.
- A system for recording and categorising pupils’ higher-order questions for ongoing investigative work should be developed.
- The use of checklists should be extended to record pupils’ progress in attaining the breadth of geographical skills and concepts.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good. Pupils present as motivated, enthusiastic learners who enjoy their learning in Geography. Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge of a range of contexts for geographical study, including their own local, natural and physical environment. Their understanding and knowledge of current and previous learning generally is very good. Within this,
there were a number of instances where the range of pupils’ knowledge of a few aspects of local and physical geography showed scope for development. Further attention should usefully be paid to ensuring that the very effective school plan for Geography is implemented consistently. Although pupils generally showed a very good understanding of appropriate geographical terminology, there were a few instances where pupils experienced difficulties in recalling topic-specific vocabulary. Pupils should be facilitated to develop a system for recording key geographical vocabulary in their copybooks as it arises incidentally in lessons. It is evident that pupils’ geographical skills and concepts are developed sequentially as they progress through the school although there is potential to place a more consistent emphasis on the development of pupils’ graphical skills. Pupils demonstrated a very good ability to generalise and apply their geographical learning.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences is very good. Pupils work as geographers both independently and collaboratively in a very purposeful and productive manner. Pupils in the focus-group described their sense of ownership of their work and outlined how the school provided opportunities for them to negotiate their own learning in Geography, thereby increasing their autonomy as learners. Pupils are enabled to use a broad range of resources such as maps, globes, pictures and digital technologies to support their learning. While high-quality photographs were used in lessons observed during the evaluation, there was potential in a few instances to make greater use of these resources to facilitate the development of pupils’ geographical skills and broader literacy development. The school affords a high priority to project work and the project work observed during the evaluation was of a very good standard.

The overall quality of teaching in Geography is very good. Teachers deliver very effective instruction resulting in very good levels of pupil participation and engagement. The classroom and school environment promotes an appreciation of the subject. Lessons in all settings were very well structured, facilitating progressive learning in all three strands. Teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively and provide interesting learning opportunities which enable pupils to demonstrate an enquiring and open-minded attitude to the world around them. Notwithstanding this very good emphasis on learning through enquiry, and the examples of very good-quality geographical investigative work observed during the evaluation, further attention should be paid to considering how best to record, categorise and consider pupils’ higher-order questions for ongoing investigative work. Lesson content in Geography is integrated successfully with other subject areas, including Science, History and Irish and pupils are enabled to make meaningful links between lesson material and their learning in these other subject areas. While there was evidence of progressive learning in mapping skills in a few classrooms, there is an overall lack of clarity with regard to how these skills are developed throughout the school.

Assessment practices are very well developed. Pupils’ prior knowledge is used as the starting point for lessons and teachers check on pupils’ understanding of lesson content at regular intervals. Detailed verbal and written developmental feedback supports pupils’ development as learners. Pupils are enabled to discuss and assess their own work and the work of others. Checklists are used effectively to provide a broad overview of pupils’ knowledge and understanding of particular topics within the geography curriculum; the use of these checklists should be extended to provide useful assessment data in relation to pupils’ skill and concept development.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of school planning for Geography is very good. The school plan is discussed, evaluated and reviewed at staff meetings and is very effective in developing a shared sense of purpose for Geography. It facilitates continuity and progression in pupils’ learning across the three strands of the geography curriculum and provides clear and practical guidance to teachers. Glance cards have been developed to provide a useful summary of the core content and approaches for each class level. Although the plan is generally implemented successfully, responses to inspector questioning during the evaluation demonstrated that there are a few aspects of pupils’ geographical learning which require further attention. There is potential to extend the current arrangements for monitoring and oversight of the plan to ensure that it is fully implemented in the broad and balanced manner intended.

4. CHILD PROTECTION
During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the school’s reception area.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
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 Scoil Áine welcomes the positive findings and feedback of the evaluation in Geography in respect of:

1. The quality of pupils’ learning
2. The learning experiences supporting pupils’ learning and teachers’ practice
3. The effectiveness of the school planning in progressing pupils’ learning

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 Board will implement the recommendations made.
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><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 <em>outstanding</em> 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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