## Curriculum Evaluation
### Science

**REPORT**

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Eoin Naofa N S</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | High Street  
Ballymore  
County Westmeath |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 17991N |

**Date of inspection: 14-01-2020**
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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 2 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection  14-01-2020

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<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<td>Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>Feedback to principal and deputy principal</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Eoin Naofa National School is a co-educational school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. There are currently one hundred and ten pupils enrolled. The school has four mainstream teachers and two special education teachers, including a teacher who is shared with another school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning is very good overall with the pupils demonstrating very positive dispositions towards their learning.
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences is good; insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to engage with digital technologies and to participate in open-ended designing and making activities.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of interest and enthusiasm towards their participation in field trips and co-curricular programmes.
- Teaching is of good quality overall with teachers utilising a broad range of teaching methodologies to successfully elicit high levels of pupil engagement; there is considerable variance in teachers’ use of assessment-for-learning (AFL) strategies and in a small number of instances aspects of provision are not fully aligned with the curriculum.
- Whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) is good; the whole-school plan is not reflective of the multi-grade context of the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Teachers should provide pupils with more consistent opportunities to engage with digital technologies and to participate in open-ended designing and making experiences to promote the pupils’ creativity and higher-order thinking skills.
- Teachers should adopt whole-school approaches to support the incremental development of pupils’ AFL skills and they should ensure that all aspects of provision are closely aligned to the teaching approaches and learning content of the curriculum.
- The in-school management (ISM) team should review the whole-school plan and develop a cyclical two-year approach covering all strands and strand units of the science curriculum.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of pupils’ learning is very good overall. The pupils demonstrate very positive dispositions towards their learning. They are confident in their ability to work as scientists and they have appropriately developed skills of predicting, questioning, investigating and experimenting and interpreting results. During interaction with the pupils, they demonstrated strong conceptual understanding of a variety of topics across the strands of the curriculum. In particular, their ability to discuss their learning about environmental awareness and care, energy and forces and materials is highly commendable.

During the lessons observed, the majority of pupils ably explored questions and they collected and analysed evidence to reach reasonable outcomes. They showed very good ability to work collaboratively during scientific investigations. Pupils in the middle and senior classes show keen awareness of the work of famous scientists, including female inventors. Pupils who participated in the focus-group discussion conducted during the evaluation reported that they experience high levels of motivation towards their learning, describing their lessons as fun and active.

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

The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences is good. Pupils enjoy suitable opportunities to explore Science in the outdoor and local environments, including opportunities to participate in field trips. The teachers invite visiting speakers, including a genealogist and a meteorologist, to share their expertise and skills with the pupils. The pupils demonstrate high levels of interest and enthusiasm towards their participation in the Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme, Anyone 4 Science and the Junior Entrepreneur Programme.

The development of pupils’ scientific skills is also promoted through their engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) experiences. They are provided with opportunities to collaborate and create items such as rockets, lighthouses and parachutes based on specific criteria. Opportunities exist for the pupils to engage in a greater variety of open-ended designing and making tasks to promote their creativity and higher-order thinking skills. The pupils use digital technologies to research projects of work. The use of digital technologies as a learning tool was not observed during the evaluation. Teachers should provide pupils with more consistent opportunities to engage with digital technologies to support them in their learning.

The overall quality of teaching is good with teachers utilising a broad range of teaching methodologies to successfully elicit high levels of pupil engagement. It is commendable that all teachers have recently engaged in professional development in Science. Their collective practice places noteworthy emphasis on the skilful use of questioning techniques and the meaningful development of pupils’ scientific vocabulary.

During the lessons observed, the teachers provided pupils with purposeful and appropriately challenging learning activities. In most instances, the teachers facilitated pupils’ understanding of a fair test very effectively. A review of pupils’ work demonstrated overemphasis on workbook use in a few contexts. This practice should be considerably reduced with a view to making increased provision for more active and engaging learning experiences. In a small number of instances, teachers’ planning is aligned to text book content; this practice does not adequately support the incremental development of pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers’ planning should be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriately aligned to the teaching approaches and learning content of the curriculum.
The overall quality of assessment is good. Teachers use observation, purposeful questioning, teacher-designed tasks, project samples and copybook work to assess and record pupils’ knowledge and understanding. There is considerable variance in teachers’ use of AfL strategies. Teachers should adopt whole-school approaches to support the incremental development of pupils’ AfL skills.

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

The quality of school planning, including SSE, is good overall. Teachers selected teaching and learning in Science as their focus for SSE in 2017. The teachers have used *Looking At Our School – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* in a purposeful manner to guide the formulation of the school’s improvement plan for Science. It is evident that the agreed actions in this plan are impacting positively on teachers’ practice and pupils’ learning experiences. There is need to develop measurable targets in the school improvement plan so that the impact and effectiveness of the SSE process on pupils’ learning outcomes can be monitored and evaluated.

The whole-school plan for Science provides valuable guidance with regard to teaching methodologies and areas of the locality for pupils to explore and investigate on an incremental basis. Overall, the delineation of learning content in the whole-school plan is not reflective of the multi-grade context of the school. The ISM team should review the whole-school plan and develop a cyclical two-year approach covering all strands and strand units of the science curriculum.
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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