

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Science**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St. Mary's Boys Senior School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Railway Road Belturbet Co. Cavan
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	18127A

**Date of inspection: 03-12-2019**



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agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
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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 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.

## **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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	03-12-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the principal</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Mary's Boys' National School is located in Belturbet, Co. Cavan and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. There are sixty-one pupils enrolled and they are distributed across classes ranging from second to sixth. The staff consists of three mainstream classes and two special education teachers, one of whom is shared with other schools.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning in Science is very good; pupils demonstrate very positive learning dispositions towards Science, a commendable understanding of key curricular concepts and significant proficiency across a range of scientific skills.
- The quality of pupils' learning experiences is excellent; they are provided with regular, rich opportunities to be active and creative in their learning, and to apply their scientific knowledge and skills in an extensive variety of authentic contexts.
- The quality of teaching of Science is very good: teachers' individual and collective practices towards the promotion of Science as a curricular subject and as a key element of responsible living is very well embedded in the culture and tradition of the school.
- Overall, assessment practices are very good; the promotion of pupil self-assessment and the monitoring of pupils' incremental learning from class to class has yet to be fully developed on a whole-school basis.
- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) in particular is very good; successive improvement initiatives have focused very successfully on pupils' scientific learning with commendable attention to caring for the environment and the promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. (STEM)

#### RECOMMENDATION

- A whole-school approach to enhancing pupil self-assessment and monitoring pupils' incremental learning and skill development in Science would further augment the very good practices in this school.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils demonstrate very positive learning dispositions towards Science and in particular, a keen interest in investigating and researching. They show a commendable knowledge and understanding of key curricular concepts and significant proficiency across a range of scientific skills. They predict and hypothesise with confidence and can articulate with ease about conditions for fair testing essential during investigations. Pupils show very good understanding of subject specific language in Science and use a range of media to record their scientific learning, including digital technologies.
- The pupils can transfer their scientific learning to new contexts and show commendable initiative in generating questions and potential lines of enquiry. During the focus-group discussion conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils spoke at length about how they enjoy problem-solving, 'figuring things out about the world around us' and adapting 'to make things work' during the Make and Design activities in particular. Pupils also spoke about the importance of caring for the environment and their involvement in local community initiatives including 'Belturbet Zero Waste' and Science week events in the neighbouring post-primary school.

### 2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

- The quality of pupils' learning experiences is excellent; they are provided with regular, rich opportunities to be active and creative in their learning, and to apply their scientific knowledge and skills in an extensive variety of authentic contexts. Working scientifically in a variety of indoor and outdoor school environments along with other relevant off-site contexts contributes to the very high quality of pupils' experience in Science. Visitors to the school, including beekeepers and engineers, have impacted positively on pupils' interest in Science and their engagement in teacher-led and pupil-led learning activities. Participation in the Green School Programme, the Discovery Primary Science programme and engagement in a number of integrated, cross-curricular STEM projects have enriched pupils' learning experiences.
- Pupils have ample opportunities to work collaboratively with other pupils whilst also being enabled to pursue individual interests. Pupils experience breadth and balance in their learning across all strands of the Science Curriculum and avail of opportunities to revisit topics of interest to allow them to deepen their learning.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall with exemplary aspects of practice noted in a few instances. This was characterised by very effective questioning and use of constructive feedback to scaffold and extend pupils' learning to optimum levels and in accordance with their varying abilities. All teachers use a suitable blend of methodologies to enable pupils to be active in their learning as individuals and as members of small and whole-class grouping.
- Comprehensive teacher planning is evident at both individual and whole-school level. Teachers prepare and use a wide range of resources very effectively to support teaching and learning in Science. Books, visual displays and digital resources are used purposefully to stimulate pupils' interest and to enable them to discover scientific learning for themselves.
- Overall, assessment practices are very good. Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to monitor pupils' learning in Science throughout the year. There remains some scope to monitor pupils' incremental progression from class to class more explicitly. While occasional

opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in pupil self-assessment during lessons, pupils' self-assessment has yet to be fully developed on a whole school basis. Consideration should now be given to providing pupils with the opportunity to create digital or hard-copy learning logs and enabling them to record their self-assessments on a more systematic basis.

### **3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING**

- The quality of school planning, including SSE is very good. The school principal promotes a culture of improvement, collaboration and creativity in teaching and learning. Together with post-holders and staff, they have been successful in embedding a number of significant and valuable practices that contribute to the very good individual and collective practices in relation to Science and Scientific learning. School leaders are currently promoting the use of digital technologies and problem-solving approaches as part of their current ongoing improvement initiative. Valuable links have been established with the parent and local community as part of the improvement processes in this school community and these practices are highly commended.

# **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 St Mary's Boys' Senior NS welcomes the very positive Curriculum Evaluation in Science conducted recently in the school and wishes to acknowledge the contents and findings of the report. The key findings are very affirming and encouraging. Of particular note, are the commendations in relation to the quality of pupils' learning, the excellent quality of learner experiences, the overall quality of the teaching of science in the school and the quality of School planning and SSE in particular.

The Board appreciates the report's acknowledgement of the culture of improvement, collaboration and creativity in teaching and learning that pervades our school resulting in very good individual and collective practices which we feel leads to highly effective outcomes for our pupils.

**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 of Management welcomes the recommendation made in the Report and the school is happy to implement it.

Work has begun to further develop a whole-school approach to enhance pupils' self-assessment and incremental learning, as recommended. An individual pupil log has been introduced. This will act as a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits effort, progress, achievements and competencies gained as the child moves through the school.

## 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.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;