

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Lorcan's Boys' National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Palmerstown, Dublin 20.
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18323A

Date of Evaluation: 26-10-2016



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 Geography 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.

Curriculum Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	26-10-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

An evaluation of Geography was undertaken in St. Lorcan's National school, Palmerstown, Dublin 20. 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.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS:

- The pupils display a positive attitude towards Geography, they enjoy their lessons and are motivated to learn.
- The teachers are commended for providing rich and varied learning experiences for the pupils.
- Good emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' knowledge of local Geography.
- While good quality learning experiences are provided to pupils in Geography, there is a need for a greater focus on the development of the pupils' geographical skills.
- There is a need to revise the whole-school plan for Geography.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that all teachers provide greater opportunities for pupils to work both independently and collaboratively in order to support pupils' development of the geographical skills.
- The whole-school plan should be revised in order to provide specific guidance to teachers' practice and clarity on the expected content and details on progression at each class level.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING IN SUBJECT

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Geography is satisfactory. The pupils display a positive attitude towards Geography, they enjoy their lessons and are motivated to learn. In the group discussion conducted during the evaluation, pupils reported that they find Geography interesting and that they enjoy participating in various projects and field trips. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their graphical skills through the use of maps and globes and the majority of pupils are competent in their overall graphical knowledge of Ireland. In order to develop a clearer understanding of where

places are and how they are interconnected, pupils would benefit from further opportunities to explore and discuss similarities and differences between their own location and contrasting places in Ireland, Europe and international locations. The overall quality of pupils' written work is good and in the majority of settings, pupils record and present their findings through a variety of methods. While pupils' knowledge of recently-covered topics was good overall, they displayed difficulty explaining the purpose of the learning tasks and making connections with other aspects of the Geography curriculum. It is advised that teachers revise topics taught more frequently and check that pupils are able to make meaningful links between the new content and lessons taught previously.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING IN SUBJECT: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

The teachers are commended for providing rich and good quality learning experiences for the pupils. Purposeful displays of pupils' work in geography are a feature of all classrooms. Very good emphasis is placed on environmental awareness and care and this is reflected in the schools' successful involvement in the *Green Schools Programme* and the *Gardening Club*.

In lessons observed the teachers' practice was good overall. Lessons were well structured and paced. Teachers made good use of resources and questioned the pupils appropriately. Good emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' knowledge of local Geography. To optimise this work, it is advised that a clear programme for the study of the locality be devised and incrementally developed from class to class. Group work was a feature of some lessons, however, there is a need for a greater balance between teacher input and purposeful pupil participation in lessons. It is recommended that all teachers provide greater opportunities for pupils to work both independently and collaboratively on activities that will support pupil's development of the geographical skills. Teachers are currently engaging with a variety of assessment strategies in Geography. Going forward, the school should develop consistent systems to record pupils' progress in Geography and to use assessment data more effectively to inform teaching and learning.

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

The quality of whole-school planning for Geography is satisfactory. The school has devised a whole-school plan. In order to increase its impact on learning, this plan should be revised and contextualised to the school. It is advised that teachers identify a wide range of suitable environments and features in the locality for inclusion in the Geography programme at each class level. To achieve a broad and balanced programme the plan would benefit from the delineation of content across the menu curriculum for each class. Specific guidance on agreed methodologies for facilitating the progression of pupils' geographical skills is needed.

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.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	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.	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
Good	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.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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
Fair	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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.