An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation  
Science

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Cill Ruadháin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Nenagh County Tipperary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18369B</td>
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Date of inspection: 04-10-2019
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 Science 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 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.

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

Date of inspection  04-10-2019

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 Náisiúnta Cill Ruadháin, known locally as Kilruane National School, is a rural co-educational school that operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The school has five mainstream teachers, two teachers of special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) and two special education teachers (SETs). A SET who is based in another school also works here for part of the week. There were 137 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of learning is very good and pupils are engaged and enthusiastic about Science.
- The school provides a broad, balanced range of learner experiences.
- The quality of teaching is very good; one of the few areas for improvement is planning for differentiation.
- The quality of assessment is good, with many whole-school approaches in place; however, the assessment instruments used do not always reflect the full breadth of the curriculum.
- Curriculum planning for teaching is good overall; the school plan for Science does not reflect some aspects of the very good practice observed with regard to skills development.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Teachers should ensure that classroom plans are specific with regard to differentiation of teaching for different levels of ability.
- The school should ensure that assessment addresses the full breadth of the science curriculum.
- The school should update the school plan for Science, with a view to reflecting and consolidating some aspects of the very good practice observed in skills development.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of learning in Science is very good. Pupils are motivated to learn and explore and are enthusiastic about their involvement in activity-based learning. The pupils demonstrated very good collaborative skills. The pupils achieve the objectives, skills and concepts of the Primary School Curriculum in Science through group work, partner work and station-teaching. These learning experiences are enhanced through the use of digital technologies for research and independent learning. The pupils can make meaningful connections between their experience of workshops and exhibitions outside of school and their school-based learning.
2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

Learner experiences are very good in Science. The school provides opportunities for pupils to work with invited guests and attend events, both of which support pupils’ learning in the subject. The school participates in initiatives such as the VEX Robotics programme.

The quality of teaching is very good. The effective implementation of a two-year curriculum plan ensures breadth and balance in the learner experiences provided. Teachers give appropriate attention to the skills sections of the curriculum, Working scientifically and Designing and making. Subject-specific language is taught explicitly and pupils have opportunities to use the language in group work. Teachers make good use of local examples to make it easier for pupils to understand and remember new concepts. All lessons observed during this inspection were prepared and resourced very effectively. Teachers should ensure that classroom plans are specific with regard to differentiation of learner experiences for different levels of ability.

The quality of assessment is good. Teachers take the time to assess pupils’ prior understanding at the beginning of each unit of work. Mind-mapping is used as a whole-school strategy for this purpose. Teacher-designed tasks are used effectively. The school should ensure that assessment in Science addresses the full breadth of the curriculum.

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

The school engages effectively in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. The principal promotes a culture of creativity in the school and encourages teachers to attend continuing professional development (CPD) and share effective practice. The co-ordinator of Science in the school supports teachers in implementing the two-year plan for curriculum implementation. The quality of curriculum planning for Science is good overall. As the school plan does not reflect some aspects of the very good practice observed in the classrooms with regard to skills development, there is room to develop this further. The school should ensure that teacher-designed tasks and rubrics take account of the skills sections of the curriculum as well as the content strands. There is scope also to provide more effective guidance in the school plan with regard to planning and recording of differentiation. The management of school resources for teaching and learning in Science is very good.
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 Náisiúnta Cill Ruadháin wishes to acknowledge the very positive findings of this report and welcomes its publication. We feel this report is a fair reflection of the effective daily practices in place at our school, including referencing the provision of high-quality teaching and learning in Science and the promotion of a culture of creativity within.

We were most pleased to read that the Inspectorate found our pupils to be engaged, enthusiastic and motivated to learn and explore. The Board is delighted to read that our pupils are provided with a broad, balanced range of learner experiences, and lessons which are prepared and resourced very effectively using a variety of teaching methodologies. We were most happy to read that learning experiences are further enhanced through the effective use of digital technologies for research and independent learning.

The Board was delighted with the mention of our school’s involvement with the VEX Robotics Programme in this report. In our experience, the inclusion of robotics education in our primary school setting supports our pupils’ learning in all facets of STEM education, with particular emphasis on working scientifically and the nurturing of their very good collaborative skills, as observed in the classrooms and referenced in this report.

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 welcomes the positive endorsement of our school plan in Science and will give careful consideration to the recommendations of the Inspectorate in the coming months.

With specific regard to skills development, the Board will ensure that this aspect of the school plan is updated, to reflect the very good practice observed in the classroom.

The Board will ensure that further guidance in the areas of assessment and the planning and recording of differentiation is provided in the plan.
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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<tr>
<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 outstanding 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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