

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

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Science**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Molaise
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Grange County Sligo
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	18575E

**Date of inspection: 14-11-2019**



---

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

## **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 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; a response was not received from the board.

## **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>	14-11-2019
<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>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Naomh Molaise National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. The school has an administrative principal, twelve mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers based in the school. Currently there are 288 pupils enrolled from junior infants to sixth class.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is good; their skills of predicting, observing, experimenting, investigating and recording are well developed.
- The quality of support for pupils' learning is good; pupils have good access to a range of resources for experimental activities.
- Overall, teaching in Science is of a high standard; almost all teachers prepare well-structured, active and challenging lessons.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory; some teachers use effective assessment for learning (AfL) strategies; however, they do not sufficiently inform differentiated planning.
- Whole-school planning for Science is of a good standard; there is scope to develop certain aspects of the plan to better inform the delivery of a balanced and developmental programme of learning.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach to assessing pupils' knowledge and skills should be agreed to guide teachers in planning for differentiated learning in Science.
- The whole-school plan for Science should systematically identify the habitats to be explored, subject-specific vocabulary and an agreed assessment policy to guide and support classroom practice.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons in Science and are motivated to learn. During the evaluation, pupils demonstrated successful learning in the strands of *Living things*, *Energy and forces* and *Materials*. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to

work scientifically and the skills of predicting, observing, experimenting, investigating and recording are well developed. Where pupils had a very good understanding of the content of the lesson, they could discuss the completed scientific experiments and describe their learning and skills development. However, there is scope to improve pupils' use of scientific vocabulary to enhance this process.

In the pupil group interview, pupils demonstrated a very high level of enthusiasm for Science. They indicated that they particularly enjoyed Science when they have opportunities to engage in experiments, present projects at assemblies, explore the environment and experience visits from local experts and engage in trips relating to the subject.

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

The quality of support for pupils' learning is good. Attractive and stimulating learning environments are provided with useful displays and samples of pupils' work. The pupils have good access to a range of materials for experimental work in the strands of *Energy and forces and Materials*. An integrated and thematic approach allows for aspects of other curricular areas including Mathematics, History, and Social Personal Health Education to be taught during Science lessons. Commendably, during the evaluation, pupils in some classrooms were enabled to work as scientists and to research collaboratively.

The internal and external school environment promotes an appreciation of and engagement in Science. The school garden, playground and local environment provide invaluable experiences for all pupils in the exploration of flora and fauna and the investigation of a variety of contrasting habitats. Pupils' learning has benefited from their use of resources in the Discover Primary Science and Mathematics Award programme. The monthly Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) challenge provides valuable opportunities for collaboration and discussion both in the homes and classrooms in terms of the assigned task.

Overall teaching in Science is of a high standard. Almost all teachers prepare well-structured, active and challenging lessons. They prepare purposeful and challenging learning activities for each strand of the curriculum. Where very good teaching was observed, pupils were enabled to work in groups and engage in purposeful activities to investigate how forces act on objects while taking cognisance of the fair test. Appropriate teaching methodologies, including investigations and experiments, facilitate purposeful and progressive learning in Science particularly in relation to enabling pupils to develop skills in the areas of working scientifically and designing and making. Teachers use a good range of questions to check for pupils' understanding of concepts. They successfully provide learning activities based on pupils' existing ideas. While some teachers plan for differentiated approaches, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. It is recommended that all teachers use differentiated approaches so as to scaffold all pupils' learning.

The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teachers use observation, teacher-designed tasks and pupils' copybooks to record and assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. To support continuity and progression, pupils should be enabled to reflect constructively on their own learning and record key facts and skills acquired. While good self and peer-assessment was noted in some instances, there remains scope to enhance and extend these practices on a whole-school basis. A whole-school approach to assessing pupils' knowledge and skills should be agreed to guide teachers in planning for differentiated learning in Science

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

The quality of whole-school planning in Science is good. Teachers have collectively developed the whole-school plan for Science. This plan outlines all strands and strand units and provides clarity in the progression and development in the programme taught. While the plan includes an environmental audit it would benefit from the identification of areas to be explored and investigated in a systematic manner. The plan should also include developmental subject-specific vocabulary and more specific guidance in relation to the implementation of the assessment policy for Science throughout 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;