An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Ballylooby N S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Cahir Co Tipperary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18582B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 21-05-2019
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 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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>21-05-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Ballylooby NS is a co-educational mainstream school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school has a staff of seven mainstream teachers catering for pupils from infants to sixth class. Three teachers provide support for pupils with learning difficulties, two of whom are shared with other schools. At the time of the evaluation, 167 pupils were enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils learning is very good; pupils’ knowledge and use of scientific language is a key strength of their learning.
- The specific skills of working scientifically are very well developed throughout the school; further attention to the skills of designing and making would enhance pupils’ learning.
- Support for pupils’ learning is of a very high standard and they are given valuable opportunities to collaboratively engage in finding solutions to authentic problems; assessment approaches, however, require development.
- The quality of teaching is high with lessons observed ranging from good to exemplary; very innovative use is made of digital technology in extending and enriching learner experiences in Science and across the curriculum.
- The strong culture of professional collaboration that exists amongst staff facilitates pupils in showcasing and celebrating their achievements in Science to their peers.
- The quality of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils’ learning is satisfactory. There is scope to review the current whole-school plan for Science.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regular opportunities for pupils to engage in design and making tasks should be provided to enable pupils master the skills of exploring, planning, making and evaluating.
- Whole-school, systematic approaches to assessment should be implemented to facilitate the recording of pupils’ knowledge, skills and dispositions and to further progress their learning.
- The whole-school plan should be reviewed to provide a balanced, developmental whole-school approach to the teaching and assessment of Science.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of pupils’ learning is very good. Pupils are highly motivated learners who derive great enjoyment from their Science lessons. They admirably described their learning across a range of Science strands and could competently explain the scientific basis of many everyday phenomena. In a focus-group conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils highlighted the immense benefit they get from using information and communications technology (ICT) to enrich their learning. Pupils have opportunities to use apps to assess their learning and also have developed PowerPoints to showcase their learning in Science to other classes. In lessons observed, pupils confidently applied many of the skills of working scientifically in response to authentic problems posed. Of particular merit was pupils’ productive participation in collaborative work at all class levels and their strong desire to work as scientists. They contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion with confidence. They are respectful of, and interested in the opinions and experiences of their peers.

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

The quality of pupils’ learner experiences is very good. Commendable emphasis is placed in all settings on developing pupils’ abilities to work scientifically. Pupils at all class levels have opportunities to apply and refine their skills as a result of the vast range of investigative work they have conducted. While pupils do experience opportunities to design and make, a stronger emphasis should be placed on this skill-set in order to appropriately progress pupils’ learning in this area. A range of co-curricular activities are offered to consolidate pupils’ learning including guest speakers, involvement in Science competitions and conservation initiatives. A school garden has been developed to complement pupils’ learning of their local environment. Excellent use is made of photographs to capture and celebrate pupils’ learning in Science.

The quality of teaching is high with lessons observed ranging from good to exemplary. All teachers provide high quality planning documentation which identifies clear, relevant learning objectives contextualised to pupils’ learning needs. Teachers prepare thoroughly for their lessons and provide pupils with bespoke resources to manipulate and use in investigations. In lessons observed, pupils had access to a range of equipment. The school is advised however, to audit current Science resources and to ensure adequate provision exists across all strands.

Teachers design and prepare a series of learning tasks suitable for achieving the specific objectives of lessons. They use a variety of methodologies including guided learning, discovery-based learning and collaborative work to create highly memorable learning experiences for pupils. In examples of very effective practice, teachers carefully managed their own input to optimise pupil participation and response. This is highly praised.

The development of pupils’ scientific language is a key strength of the school. Through the use of impressive questioning techniques, teachers skilfully prompt and probe pupils’ scientific understanding. Pupils are encouraged to provide thoughtful, comprehensive answers in response to questions posed. Furthermore, teacher-questioning was observed to provide pupils with multiple opportunities to use newly acquired vocabulary in a variety of contexts. Teachers meaningfully differentiate content and activities to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and experience success as learners. Purposeful development of pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills was evident in all lessons.
ICT is used innovatively to capture pupil learning and also to provide pupils with opportunities to review their learning. Professional dialogue and collaboration has allowed the very good practice in the use of ICT to become a consistent feature of practice across the school. Teachers have engaged in whole-staff professional development in Science and recognise the value of building and sharing their expertise in order to strengthen whole-staff capacity.

Teachers employ a variety of methods to assess pupils’ knowledge and skills of topics taught including, teacher observation, teacher-questioning and the collecting of work samples. Assessment for learning strategies are commendably promoted in some settings. Of particular note was the sharing of learner outcomes and success criteria with pupils. There is a need, however, to develop whole-school approaches to assessing pupil progress to facilitate the recording of pupil attainment and to further progress their learning.

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

The quality of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils’ learning is satisfactory. A whole-school plan for Science has been developed. The current plan requires revision in order to reflect to a greater extent the very good provision that exists at classroom level. This plan should ensure continuity and progression in pupil learning and lead to pupils experiencing breath and balance in curriculum coverage. Strategies for assessment should also be identified to ensure learning at all class levels is regularly and appropriately assessed.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Ballylooby National School welcomes this Inspection Report and is greatly encouraged by its very positive findings. It affirms that the teaching and learning in our school is of a high quality. We are delighted that the inspection found our pupils to be highly motivated learners, who derive great enjoyment from their lessons and possess a strong desire to contribute to class discussions and work collaboratively together. We are very pleased that the report highlights our pupils’ well-developed scientific skills and language as a key strength of our school and praises the innovative use of digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning. This report acknowledges the hard work and dedication of our staff and the strong culture of professional collaboration that exists between our teachers to provide pupils with highly memorable learning experiences.

Part B  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

We accept the recommendations of the report. Work has already begun on a review of the Science plan which will include a whole-school approach to assessment in Science and highlight opportunities for designing and making tasks in lessons. These steps will further enhance teaching and learning in our school.