Curriculum Evaluation

Science

Report

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>S N Na Naomh Uile</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Church Ave, Mullingar Co Westmeath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18744B</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 29-11-2016
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 Science 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.

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.
SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Náisiúnta na Naomh Uile is a vertical co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Meath and Kildare. There are four mainstream classrooms catering for pupils from infants to sixth classes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• Pupils’ learning in Science is very good, and their scientific skills and concept development is incrementally extended across the school.
• Teachers promote Science as an enjoyable and challenging learning experience through the provision of a range of appropriate learning activities and experiences.
• All teachers prepare well-structured and appropriately resourced lessons.
• Pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate and deep appreciation of their own school environment, and they are actively involved in its enhancement and development.
• Teachers model specific language during science lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Further engagement in design-and-make activities for pupils across the strands of the science curriculum, with opportunities to assess and review their designs is recommended.
• The identification and pre-teaching of science terminology at the commencement of lessons should become a consistent feature of teachers’ practice.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING IN SUBJECT

Pupils’ learning in Science is very good. As they progress from class to class, their scientific skills and their concept development are incrementally extended. Many pupils in the middle and senior classes are able to confidently identify variables, and can capably explain and apply the concept of fair-testing in relation to practical experiments. In all classes, pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate, and deep appreciation of their own school environment, and they are actively involved in its enhancement and development. They have a very good understanding of living things in a range of habitats, and can suggest a range of strategies for improving and caring for the local environment and habitats beyond this area. Pupils are positively disposed towards Science and appreciate its important contribution to
While they have some opportunities to engage in making and testing models, there is scope to develop this work further. To this end, more frequent problem-solving opportunities should be provided for pupils across the strands of the science curriculum. Further engagement in design-and-make activities, with opportunities to assess and review their designs is also recommended.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING IN SCIENCE: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The school provides very good support for pupils’ learning in Science. Teachers promote Science as an enjoyable and challenging learning experience through the use of the local environment and through participation in open-ended investigations. In addition, the judicious use of textbooks, field-trips and the involvement of pupils in co-curricular initiatives support their learning in Science. Opportunities for integrated and thematic approaches allow for the teaching of Science in a cross-curricular manner. Pupils are encouraged to research projects of interest to them, individually and in groups, and the display of this work enhances the classrooms and general circulation areas. Most notably, pupils have some opportunities to share their work with members of the wider community at key points in the school’s calendar.

Overall, teaching is of a high standard. All teachers prepare well-structured science lessons, and active and challenging lessons were observed in a number of settings. Teachers model subject-specific language during lessons. To further support pupils’ learning, the identification and pre-teaching of science terminology at the commencement of lessons should become a consistent feature of teachers’ practice. Pupils record their work in copybooks, and a variety of strategies is used to assess their learning. There is a need to develop a more consistent approach to recording their progress in Science. Further opportunities to incrementally develop and embed self-assessment strategies should be explored.

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

Whole-school planning for Science is good. The plan has been recently reviewed to ensure that provision across the school is broad and balanced, and sets out the strands and strand units to be covered for each class level. However, to ensure that the whole-school plan is more informative and supportive of teachers’ classroom planning, the plan should be more reflective of the school’s context, and include the subject specific language to be taught at each class level. There is potential also to document teachers’ good practice in the exploration of the local environment within the whole-school 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 the school’s provision of each area.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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. 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.</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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