

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Fibough National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Caisleán Na Mainge Co Chiarraí
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18756I

Date of inspection: 20-01-2020



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agus Scileanna**
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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

Date of inspection	20-01-2020
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

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Fibough National School is a co-education, Catholic school situated on the Dingle peninsula. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. It has two mainstream class teachers and a shared special education teacher (SET). There were thirty pupils enrolled at the school at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching is very good; teachers plan and present interesting and challenging lessons.
- Pupils display a positive attitude towards Science and the overall quality of their learning is very good.
- All teachers demonstrated very successful classroom management skills and pupil behaviour was excellent during the evaluation.
- Assessment practices are good overall; while assessment of learning is embedded in practice, there is scope to further develop assessment for learning strategies.
- There is a commendable emphasis on vocabulary development in Science; the provision of more regular opportunities for pupils' to use this new language during lessons would be beneficial to their learning.
- Some use is made of the school and local environments to support pupils' learning; there is scope to make greater use of the immediate school environs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The very effective assesment practices observed in one setting should now be extended on a whole-school basis.
- More regular opportunities should be provided to pupils to use new scientific vocabulary during learning activities.
- The school should make greater use of the immediate environment to extend pupils' learning experiences.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is very good. They display very high levels of interest in Science and are motivated to learn. They are confident in their knowledge of Science and in their ability to work as scientists. Most pupils display a very good level of knowledge and understanding across the strands of the science curriculum. Their scientific skills are very well developed at each class level, with pupils in middle and senior classes familiar with the concept of a fair test. They are

able to use subject-specific language when describing their learning experiences. More regular opportunities should be provided for using this language during learning activities. During lessons observed, pupils demonstrated an ability to pose questions, predict results and test ideas through experimentation. They were able to recall designing-and-making activities and experiments, which required the pupils to work collaboratively in planning, designing, making, testing and evaluating. Extending opportunities for pupils to engage in free exploration of materials in science lessons will further nurture pupils' inventive and creative capacities. In the focus-group interview, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the breadth and balance of learning activities and experiences provided for them. They reported that they enjoy projects, design and make activities and experiments.

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

The quality of pupils' learning experiences is very good. Pupils are afforded opportunities to engage in a broad range of science activities. Good emphasis is placed on the environmental awareness and care strand and this is reflected in the school's successful involvement in the Green Schools Programme, which includes a school garden that has been created in partnership with parents. Teachers effectively employ a wide range of active and collaborative approaches and present pupils with regular opportunities to practise and develop their skills in working scientifically.

The quality of teaching in Science is very good. Teachers are very well prepared for their teaching and provide good quality planning documents. The modelling of topic-specific vocabulary and the use of high quality visuals to support pupil learning were a consistent feature of practice. All teachers demonstrated very successful classroom management skills and pupil behaviour was excellent during the evaluation. Highly respectful interactions were observed across the school.

The management of appropriate resources to support pupils' learning in Science is very good. There is, however, scope to make greater use of the school and local environments in teaching and learning of Science. Pupils' work in Science is displayed attractively throughout the school and is recorded using digital technologies.

Assessment practices are good overall. A broad range of assessment practices were evident in one setting including the use of worksheets, self-assessment using technology, checklists and teacher questioning. Pupils' engagement in activities and experiments was carefully observed. Great attention was afforded to both pupils' questions and their responses. Appropriate assessment tasks were set to provide valuable insights to inform the next steps about teaching and pupils' learning. The very effective practice observed should now be extended on a whole-school basis.

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

The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE is very good. Curricular leadership and a whole-school culture of collaboration underpin the high quality of planning, teaching and learning in Science. The whole-school plan clearly delineates the content for each class using a two-year cycle. This is used purposefully by teachers to inform their practice with due regard for the multi-grade classrooms and the need to implement a curriculum which is spiral in nature and balanced across the four strands. School self-evaluation and improvement initiatives in Science are currently being undertaken. Teachers have availed of continuous professional development to support the ongoing development of their professional knowledge and skills in relation to Science.

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
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 <i>very good</i> 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. 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;

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 welcomes this report that confirms the work of school management and staff. The recognition of highly respectful interactions across the whole school is particularly welcomed as well as the quality of teaching and learning that is noted as taking place in the school. The Inspection process assisted greatly in the school's own self-evaluation and the board of management will assist the school in implementing the recommendations outlined in the school inspection 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.

Use of the School's Immediate Surroundings: The school's draft Science plan will be reviewed in light of the Science inspection. Staff will discuss and identify meaningful learning opportunities in the school's immediate surroundings which will enable students to contextualise learning concepts. Such learning activities will be listed in the Final Whole School Science plan.

Assessment Practices: Staff will collaborate and share assessment tools which can be implemented on a whole school level.

Use of Scientific vocabulary during lessons: Staff will endeavour to provide more regular opportunities for students to use new scientific vocabulary during learning activities. A list of scientific language will be drawn up and included in the Whole school plan. Teachers can refer to this list to assist with individual planning.