

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

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Science**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Scoil Náisiúnta Mícheál Naofa
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Holycross Thurles County Tipperary
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	18775M

**Date of inspection: 06-11-2019**



## **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 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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## **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>Dates of inspection</b>	05-11-2019 & 06-11-2019
<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

Scoil Náisiúnta Mícheál Naofa (St. Michael's National School) is situated in the village of Holycross, Co. Tipperary. There are 223 pupils currently enrolled. The school has an administrative principal, nine mainstream class teachers and five special education teachers (SETs). The Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly is the patron of the school.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Both the overall quality of pupils' learning in Science and their learning experiences are very good.
- The overall quality of teachers' practice is good, with many examples of very good teaching observed during the evaluation.
- Planning for Science at whole-school level and at individual teacher level is very good.
- Science assessment is good overall; a school-wide approach to assessing the subject has not been implemented.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach to the assessment in Science should be agreed and implemented.
- Discovery or nature tables should be established in each classroom.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The overall quality of learning in Science is very good. Learner outcomes in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. The pupils at each class level demonstrated very high levels of enjoyment and motivation. They participated very actively and willingly in the activities and experiments, asking questions and suggesting possible solutions confidently.

The pupils at each class level demonstrated good knowledge of the topics they had studied. Most pupils were confident and articulate in talking about the experiments they had conducted. Commendable projects completed by pupils, across the curriculum strands, were on display in each classroom. The pupils clearly take pride in their work and follow the guidance they receive to improve it. As appropriate, there was clear progression in pupils' learning outcomes from junior to senior class level.

Most pupils contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussions with confidence. In the focus-group interview, pupils reported regular opportunities to work together in groups. They also have regular opportunities to develop skills such as predicting, testing and recording findings. The

pupils were especially positive about their educational walking tours of the Holycross area. These walks place particular emphasis on the curriculum strands *Living things* and *Environmental awareness and care*. Many of the pupils reported that Science was their favourite subject.

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

The quality of learner experiences provided in Science is very good overall. Meaningful learning activities are organised at each class level. Pupils' skills in working scientifically are very well developed through working together on stimulating experiments.

The school is very well stocked with scientific materials and resources to facilitate active learning and to encourage pupils to discover things for themselves. These materials include age-appropriate educational charts, books with a scientific theme, and teaching aids to support learning in each strand of the curriculum. It is recommended that discovery or nature tables be established in each classroom to further enhance pupils' learning experiences. These should be developed and adapted according to the topics being studied.

The overall quality of teachers' practice is good. Aspects of the teaching at each class level are very good. Very high-quality teaching approaches were observed in some classrooms with teachers setting realistic goals allowing pupils to experience a sense of achievement. Each teacher prepares a broad and balanced programme, covering each of the curriculum strands as appropriate. Classroom management is very good. Positive relationships and interactions between teachers and pupils and among the pupils themselves create a co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment.

There was some variation observed with regard to differentiation for pupils' learning needs: this ranged from satisfactory to very good. Where very good pupil support was observed, the teachers provided individual assistance as necessary and ensured scientific concepts were explained carefully. Careful attention was also given to ensuring that collaborative learning was a central part of conducting experiments. In instances where pupil support was less successful, whole-class teaching was prevalent with limited attention given to individual pupils' needs.

The use of assessment to support learning in Science is good overall. Assessment practices at some class levels are very good, including the commendable use of pupil self-assessment. Some assessment practices have room to improve, requiring a more regular and structured approach. A school-wide approach to assessment should assist the school in celebrating pupils' achievements in Science, while also identifying areas for improvement.

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

The school participates in the School Excellence Fund Digital Cluster Group with other primary and post-primary schools in the local area. Such participation has contributed to the overall curriculum planning process for the teaching of Science, with planning for the subject being of a very good standard at whole-school level and at individual teacher level.

The school plan has recently been revised and ensures that a broad and balanced programme is implemented in a two-year cycle. While reference is made to assessment in the school plan, it is recommended that approaches to assessing Science be agreed and implemented on a whole-school basis. The management of resources is good, and a science-rich environment is being developed 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;