Curriculum Evaluation

Geography

REPORT

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<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St Patrick’s N. S.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Killinagh Blacklion Via Sligo Co Cavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>19871N</td>
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Date of inspection: 28-03-2019
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 Geography 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, 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.
**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

St Patrick’s National School is a co-educational primary school located in Blacklion, Co. Cavan which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. The school has sixty-one pupils distributed across three mainstream classrooms. It is also the base school for one special education teacher.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good; pupils demonstrate commendable knowledge and appreciation of their local geography in particular, along with a keen understanding of key geographical concepts.
- Pupils’ learning experiences are very good overall; while they enjoy regular opportunities to work as geographers in a variety of meaningful contexts, their opportunities to engage in project work are limited in some contexts.
- Teaching is very good overall; teachers are purposeful in their promotion of subject-specific language within well-structured lessons and they integrate geography very effectively with other curricular areas.
- The overall quality of assessment is very good; while individual teachers adopt a suitable range of assessment approaches within the context of their own classes, a whole-school approach to monitoring pupils’ incremental learning and progression in Geography across the classes has not yet been adopted.
- The whole-school plan for Geography has been recently reviewed and provides clear guidance to support the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum; school self-evaluation and improvement initiatives in literacy and numeracy incorporate and enrich many elements of the Geography curriculum.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Teachers should provide more regular opportunities for pupils to engage in project work throughout the year in all classes to enhance the development of their investigation and research skills.
- Teachers should develop a whole-school approach to assessing pupils’ learning in Geography and this should support the monitoring of pupils’ learning on an incremental basis across the eight-year cycle of primary school.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good. Pupils demonstrated very high levels of engagement during the lessons observed and considerable enthusiasm in relation to their learning across all strands of the Geography curriculum. Pupils’ knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their local, natural and human environments is exemplary. Pupils in the focus group reported positively on their learning in Geography and, in particular, on their experiences of gardening and the Green Schools Programme which are ongoing activities throughout the school year and how these have contributed to their keen awareness of the importance of environmental awareness and care. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of key geographical concepts, such as weather, climate, sustainable living and interdependence between the natural and man-made environments. Mapping skills are particularly well-developed and progression is evident from class to class. Pupils use geographical terms very competently to reflect and report on their learning. Their sense of place and direction are strong in most instances. Pupils can compare and contrast different national, European and global areas and they display an appreciation of people from diverse environments and cultures. Pupils’ written and pictorial work is carefully presented.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The quality of pupils’ learning experiences is very good. They experience a broad and balanced programme of activities that places appropriate emphasis on the development of positive learning dispositions, knowledge, understanding and geographical skills. Pupils enjoy regular opportunities to be active in their learning. Pupils from the infants and first classes participate in high quality, play-based learning which is underpinned by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Pupils from second to sixth classes enjoy frequent opportunities to engage in gardening, developing geographical and life skills. Staff in the school has established valuable links with the local and wider community, with many members of the local community making valuable contributions to the learning experiences provided for pupils. While pupils enjoy regular opportunities to work as geographers in a variety of meaningful contexts, their opportunities to engage in project work are limited in some contexts. Teachers should provide more regular opportunities for pupils to engage in project work throughout the year in all classes to enhance the development of their investigation and research skills. Pupils are enabled to make connections in their learning and this contributes to the cohesiveness of their learning experience. They are provided with opportunities to use and transfer their geographical skills and knowledge to other curricular areas, such as, Mathematics and Science.

The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that lessons facilitate the development of pupils’ understanding, skills and learning dispositions as well as knowledge. They prepare a wide range of resources which are used purposefully within the indoor and outdoor learning environments to stimulate and scaffold pupils’ learning. Digital technology is used effectively in most settings to support teaching and learning.

All teachers presented well-structured lessons which were suitably differentiated for pupils of varying abilities and learning styles and which facilitated active, enriching learning for pupils. A whole-school emphasis on promoting pupils’ language skills impacts positively on teachers’ individual practice as all teachers model and elicit subject-specific language and regularly check pupils’ understanding.
The overall quality of assessment is very good. Teachers provide valuable formative feedback to pupils and skilfully use a wide range of open-ended questions and prompts to consolidate and extend pupils’ learning. It was noted that pupil self-assessment was effectively supported by teachers in a number of instances in each mainstream classroom although there remains some scope for these good practices to be further developed. Each individual teacher uses a range of assessment approaches to monitor and support pupils’ learning in each classroom. A whole-school approach to monitoring pupils’ incremental learning and progression in Geography across the classes has not yet been adopted and this would augment the very good assessment practices that have been established.

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

The overall effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils’ learning is very good. It is evident that school leaders promote a culture of improvement and collaboration and that teachers work together to provide pupils with a broad and balanced learning experience. The whole-school plan for Geography has been recently reviewed to delineate the content for the multi-grade classrooms. Teachers plan to include additional rubrics that illustrate the various options within specific strand units and to continue to augment the digital and concrete resources that support the implementation of the Geography curriculum. A whole-school emphasis has been placed on aligning aspects of the Geography curriculum with History and Science to enhance the cohesiveness of the pupils’ learning experience. School self-evaluation and improvement initiatives in literacy and numeracy incorporate and enrich many elements of the Geography curriculum.

The leaders and staff of this school have devoted considerable attention to providing books and digital reading material aligned to the themes of the Geography curriculum within attractive, learner-friendly environments. School planning indicates that a range of suitable trails and resource packs have been prepared to support pupils’ exploration of geographical concepts and skills at the various class levels. The school leaders have optimised the use of the school website and other communication channels to highlight and share pupils’ learning experiences in Geography with the parent and wider community to support continuity in learning between home and school.
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 acknowledges and welcomes the positive findings of the report.

We welcome the recognition of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning within the school.

We commend the observation of the levels of enthusiasm and engagement in learning of our pupils.

We acknowledge the effectiveness of whole school planning within the school and the opportunities given to pupils to engage with their local environment.

We support and acknowledge the finding of co-operation and collaboration among the staff and the role of the Principal in actively encouraging distributed leadership.

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 will work to fully implement the recommendations in the coming academic year 2019/2020.

We will provide regular opportunities for pupils to engage in project work throughout the year.

Teachers will develop and use rubrics to develop and ensure depth within strand units of Geography Curriculum.
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.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</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 <em>outstanding</em> 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. 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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