An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Iosagáin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>19952N</td>
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Date of inspection: 25-09-2018
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 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

Dates of inspection  24-09-2018 to 25-09-2018

Inspection activities undertaken
- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Review of relevant documents
- Pupil focus-group interview

- Observation of teaching and learning
- Examination of pupils’ work
- Interaction with pupils
- Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoll Iosagáin is a rural, coeducational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. The staff consists of seven mainstream class teachers and six school-based teachers who support pupils with special educational needs, two of whom are job sharing. An additional two teachers provide support to pupils with learning needs for a total of ten hours per week. At the time of the evaluation, there were 196 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning in Science is good overall, although there is scope to develop pupils’ attainment and skills in specific strands further.
- Pupils’ learning experiences are good; pupils engage in experiments, field trips and a number of national programmes which consolidate and extend their learning in Science.
- The quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was good.
- There is scope to develop teachers’ collaborative practice to ensure greater continuity and progression in pupils’ learning.
- The whole-school plan for Science requires further development.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the Energy and forces strand of the curriculum and on the integration of Designing and making skills into each of the curricular strands.
- The whole-school plan for Science should be developed to include a two-year plan of content and assessment approaches which address the attainment of learning objectives and skills.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
- The quality of pupils’ learning in Science is good overall. Pupils are positively disposed towards Science and enjoy their learning in the subject.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge of certain topics under the strands of Living things, Materials and Environmental awareness and care. However, there is scope to develop pupils’ knowledge of the Energy and forces strand further.
- Pupils’ skills in observation, prediction, investigation, analysis and the recording of data are developed effectively through lesson content and teacher-directed experiments. In many settings, pupils have yet to achieve learning objectives related to the Designing and making
skills of the curriculum. More frequent opportunities should be provided to pupils to develop these skills under each strand of the curriculum.

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

- The support provided for pupils in Science is of a good quality.
- The quality of learner experiences is good. Pupils participated with interest in the lessons observed. Cooperative, affirming and productive learning environments were notable features of practice in all settings. During the focus group interview, pupils reported that they participated in Science lessons weekly and that there was generally good variety in the content of their lessons. Pupils stated that they were facilitated to conduct science experiments monthly, but that these experiments were often closed investigations completed to affirm previously established outcomes. Pupils expressed a keen interest in conducting open investigations and self-directed project work more frequently, arising from their own questions on topics.
- Pupils’ experiences in Science are consolidated and extended through the schools’ participation in The Green Schools and Junior Entrepreneur programmes. Guest speakers and field trips are organised annually to complement the implementation of the science curriculum. The school grounds and gardens are used effectively to develop pupils’ knowledge of Plant and animal life.
- The quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was good. Teachers’ preparation for lessons was of a good to very good standard. Individual lessons were well structured and resourced. Opportunities were provided for pupils to work collaboratively in a productive manner. In some settings, teachers placed very good emphasis on the explicit teaching of vocabulary related to lesson content. Skilful teacher questioning and carefully planned learning activities ensured that pupils were enabled to use this language in meaningful contexts. This very good practice should be extended to all settings.
- There is scope to develop teachers’ collective practice further. While pupils’ learning outcomes are good in aspects of the curriculum, there remains a need for greater continuity and progression in pupils’ learning from class to class.
- The overall quality of assessment in Science is satisfactory. Teacher observation and teacher-designed tasks and tests are the primary forms of assessment used. To progress pupils’ learning in Science, consideration should be given to the development of curricular profiles which record pupils’ attainment of learning objectives and skills at each class level. Greater emphasis should also be placed on strategies that promote pupil self-assessment of attainment in Science.

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

- The whole-school plan was reviewed in 2016. While it provides some direction to teachers, it requires further development. It is recommended that the school agrees a two-year plan, which details the content and skills to be taught under each strand of the science curriculum, at each class level. Revised approaches to assessment should also be outlined in the plan.
- The management of resources for Science is satisfactory. The school plan outlines a limited range of resources available in the school to support teachers’ implementation of the curriculum. To enable pupils to engage productively in practical work, increased resourcing should be prioritised.
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>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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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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 Scoil Iosagáin wishes to acknowledge the affirmations and recommendations of the Inspectorate regarding the delivery of the science curriculum, following the Curriculum Evaluation conducted in the school on the 24th and 25th of September, 2018. The board is pleased the Inspectorate found that, "co-operative, affirming and productive learning environments were notable features of practice in all settings," and will work with the staff of the school in implementing the recommendations contained in the 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.

The school will implement the recommendations of the report with the support of the board of management and the following actions will be undertaken;

- A greater emphasis will be placed on the Energy & Forces strand of the curriculum.
- The skill of Designing and making will be integrated more into each of the four strand areas.
- The whole school plan will be redeveloped to include a "two year plan" of content which will detail the content and skills to be taught under each strand of the science curriculum at each class level.
- Approaches to assessment will be reviewed and in particular, we will look at the development of curricular profiles which will record the attainment of learning objectives and skills at each class level.