

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Coore National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Coore Mullagh Ennis County Clare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20404M

Date of inspection: 12-11-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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	12-11-2019
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 and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Coore National School is a co-educational primary school located approximately eight kilometres from Miltown Malbay, County Clare. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe and participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. There are three mainstream class teachers and two special education teachers, one of whom is based in another school. There were thirty-two pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall learning in Science is good, with scope to improve the pupils' confidence in discussing their learning.
- Pupils' learning experiences are good; their engagement in investigative work across all strands of the science curriculum is limited, however.
- Overall, teaching in the lessons observed was good, with elements of very good practice noted.
- School planning for Science is effective, with scope to include further detail in certain areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Opportunities for pupils to discuss, explain and evaluate their learning should be extended to support pupils in improving their ability to talk about their learning confidently.
- All teachers should prepare scientific investigations for pupils in each strand of the science curriculum.
- The investigations and the designing and making activities to be conducted in each strand of the science curriculum should be documented in the school plan.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is good. Most pupils demonstrated enjoyment in their learning and were motivated to learn during the lessons observed. Pupils in the focus-group interview displayed very positive attitudes to their learning in Science.

The majority of pupils responded well to questioning across the strands of the science curriculum. However, pupils' confidence in discussing their learning needs to be improved. Opportunities for all pupils to discuss, explain and evaluate their learning should be extended.

The majority of pupils achieve a commendable standard in developing their skills as scientists. These include observing, predicting, experimenting and recording.

Good-quality samples of the pupils' work, including photographs of pupils engaging in science activities, are displayed in classrooms and on corridors. Pupils record their work effectively in copies using diagrams, concept maps, drawings and written reports.

Very high-quality examples of the senior pupils' work in designing and making activities in the strand *Energy and forces* were observed during the evaluation. Pupils at all class levels should be enabled to engage in more designing and making activities in all strands of the science curriculum.

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

The learning experiences in Science are good. All pupils had opportunities to work collaboratively during the lessons observed. Further use should be made of pair work to support the pupils' ability to discuss and share their learning.

All pupils engaged effectively in investigative work during the lessons observed. However, pupils' engagement in open-ended investigations across all strands of the science curriculum is limited. The pupils in the focus-group interview reported that they would like to conduct more investigations during science lessons. All teachers should provide opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative work in each strand of the science curriculum.

Commendably, the pupils engage in a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to support their learning in Science. These activities include the Creative Clusters initiative, the Explorers Education Programme, the Green Schools Programme and the Heritage in Schools Scheme. External speakers visit the school occasionally to share their expertise in Science with the pupils.

While some pupils use information and communications technology (ICT) to research topics in Science, the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool should be extended.

All classrooms were characterised by very respectful interactions between the teachers and pupils and among the pupils themselves. The pupils' behaviour during the evaluation was highly commendable.

Overall, the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, with elements of very good practice noted. All teachers were well prepared for lessons and used a range of effective teaching strategies, including whole-class teaching, group work and the use of concrete materials.

All lessons were well structured and pupils' prior learning was used as the starting point. Practice was highly effective where very good teacher questioning guided the pupils' in the exploration of scientific concepts. Elements of some lessons were dominated by teacher input. Teachers should ensure that there is a better balance between teacher input and guided pupil discovery and discussion in lessons.

Effective planning practices are used by all teachers. In future, the key vocabulary to be taught across all strands of the science curriculum should be identified in teachers' planning documents.

A range of effective practices is used to assess learning in Science, including useful teacher-designed tests. Very limited assessment for learning (AfL) strategies were observed during the evaluation. Whole-school approaches to AfL should be agreed and implemented to enhance the pupils' achievement and to support them in reflecting on their learning.

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

School planning for Science is effective. The whole-school plan provides good guidance to teachers on the delivery of the science curriculum in a two-year cycle. Habitats in the immediate environment are identified to support pupils' learning in the strand *Living things*. To enhance practice, the investigations and the designing and making activities to be conducted in each strand of the curriculum should be documented in the plan.

The school has a good range of resources to support teaching and learning in Science and these are organised very effectively.

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 the main findings in the inspection report. We appreciate the acknowledgement that the overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is good. We are pleased the report recognised the very positive attitudes of our pupils to learning in Science.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Work on the recommendations made by the Inspectorate has already begun at a whole-school level. We look forward to improving teaching and learning in Science throughout our 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
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;