

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil na Mainistreach Quin Dangan
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newline Road Quin County Clare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	204760

Date of inspection: 02-10-2019



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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 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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	02-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil na Mainistreach is a co-educational primary school situated in Quin, County Clare, operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. It has an administrative principal, twelve mainstream teachers, and five special education teachers (SETs), one of whom is based in another school in the locality. There were 290 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning in Science is good.
- The quality of learner experiences is good, with commendable engagement in co-curricular initiatives and activities.
- The assessment of learning is good.
- The quality of teaching is good, with scope to broaden the range of investigative work in each strand of the science curriculum.
- Pupils' ability to discuss and report confidently on their learning in Science is an area for improvement.
- School planning to progress pupils' learning is effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Each teacher should ensure that investigative work is conducted for all strands of the science curriculum, to further develop pupils' understanding of underlying scientific principles.
- The pupils' ability to discuss and present their learning in Science should be improved.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is good. Their engagement in learning is very good overall with high levels of enjoyment and motivation evident in almost all classrooms. The pupils who participated in the focus-group spoke enthusiastically about their learning and how investigative work was valuable in challenging their opinions.

In their interactions with the inspectors, the pupils demonstrated a good understanding of scientific concepts, such as how to ensure a test is fair when conducting investigations. They demonstrated good knowledge of the strands *Living Things*, *Environmental awareness and care* and *Energy and Forces*. The infant and junior classes make good use of the school grounds and

local habitats. There should be a greater emphasis on the use of the local environment in the middle and senior classes.

Skills development receives due attention at each class level. All pupils have opportunities to work scientifically and engage in designing and making tasks. Predicting, questioning and recording results are an integral part of the experiments and investigations conducted by the pupils.

Following the specific lessons observed, almost all pupils could discuss their learning confidently using the key vocabulary taught. However, the ability of the majority of pupils to discuss their learning across all strands, including their previous investigative work, needs to be improved.

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

The quality of support for pupils' learning in Science is good. There were commendable opportunities for pupils to collaborate in almost all lessons observed and there was an appropriate range of resources and materials available. All teachers displayed very successful classroom management skills. Highly respectful interactions were observed between the teachers and pupils and among the pupils themselves.

Pupils' learner experiences are enhanced through the school's engagement with a commendable range of co-curricular initiatives and projects. These include Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) initiatives, Green Schools, Tidy Towns, Science Week exhibitions, and a range of guest speakers who share their expertise with the pupils.

The quality of teaching is good overall, with aspects of the teaching observed ranging from very good to satisfactory. Teachers' preparation for lessons was of a high quality overall, with learning outcomes, key vocabulary and learning activities clearly identified in individual planning. The majority of learning activities had a clear and meaningful purpose. In a minority of lessons, the activities were not linked appropriately to the intended learning outcome and the pupils were unsure of the purpose of the tasks. In future, each teacher should ensure that appropriate investigative work is conducted for each strand of the curriculum, to further develop pupils' understanding of underlying scientific principles.

Where highly effective practice was evident, the lesson content was linked to the pupils' previous learning and there was appropriate lesson structure and pace. Critically, there was also a good balance between teacher-led and pupil discussion. Pupils' learning was differentiated in these lessons to ensure an appropriate challenge for all and the teachers used high-quality questioning to enhance the discovery process for the pupils.

The quality of assessment is good in Science. Pupils' written work is monitored and corrected regularly; appropriate written feedback is provided in most cases. All teachers maintain useful portfolios of work for individual pupils. Digital portfolios are also maintained throughout the school. In some classes, these are also used by the pupils to self-assess their work. This good practice should be developed further to enhance the assessment and recording of pupils' progress in Science.

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

The effectiveness of school planning in progressing pupils' learning is good. The whole-school plan for Science was reviewed recently and provides helpful guidance on skills development for the subject. The plan includes a useful environmental audit of the school grounds, identifying habitats for investigation by the pupils.

It is evident that the work the school has done using the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is having a positive effect on teachers' practice in Science. For example, key vocabulary is identified and taught in lessons. To further enhance consistent practice across the school, the content progression for each strand, as well as specific investigations to be conducted at each class level, should be identified in the plan.

The school manages its resources for the teaching and learning of Science effectively. The school leaders promote a culture of collaboration and the board of management supports the teachers in their continuing professional development.

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;