An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Salesian Primary School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Fernbank / North Circular Road / Limerick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>20496U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 13-03-2019
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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>12-03-2019 and 13-03-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Salesian Primary School is located in Limerick city and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick and the trusteeship of the Salesian Sisters. It provides education for both girls and boys from junior infants to first class, and girls only from second class to sixth. Currently, there is an administrative principal, eighteen mainstream teachers and nine special education teachers (SETs) based in the school. There were 450 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• Pupils’ learning in Science is good overall; the majority of pupils demonstrated limited knowledge though of the strand Living things in relation to their local environment.
• Overall, the learner experiences in Science are commendable.
• The teaching, as observed, was good; there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative work and activities in Designing and making in some settings.
• Assessment practices are not being implemented systematically in respect of the subject.
• Whole-school planning for Science is very good, overall.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Pupils’ learning in the strand of Living things in relation to the local environment should be improved.
• All teachers should prepare meaningful and challenging learning activities to support the development of pupils’ investigative skills and their skills in activities in Designing and making.
• Whole-school approaches to assessment of learning and assessment for learning in Science should be agreed and implemented.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
Pupils’ learning in Science is good overall. In the lessons observed, the quality of the learner outcomes ranged from fair to very good. In most lessons, pupils were engaged effectively in their learning and were motivated to learn.

Pupils in most classes could discuss their learning confidently across a range of strands of the science curriculum. The majority of pupils, however, were not competent in the discussion of their learning in the strand of Living things, particularly in relation to the local environment. Pupils’ learning in this area should be improved.
The majority of pupils could discuss the investigative activities they had engaged in at a commendable level. In a few settings, pupils displayed a very good understanding of activities in Designing and making. However, in a significant minority of middle and senior classes pupils did not demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the concept of a fair test or the investigative process. In a small number of classes, evidence of pupils’ progress in Science was limited. Pupils’ copybooks and the wider school environment should be used more effectively to record and celebrate pupils’ learning in the subject.

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

Overall, the learner experiences in Science are good. In the majority of lessons observed, pupils were engaged in meaningful and appropriately challenging learning activities. Pupils’ collaborative discussion was a commendable feature of almost all lessons. In a focus-group discussion, pupils reported that they regularly use their learning in Science in other subjects and that they enjoy using information and communications technology (ICT) to research and present their project work.

Pupils engage in a range of co-curricular learner experiences, including projects in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). It is highly commendable that, in the infant classes, learning in Science is developed through play using Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Parental and community expertise is used effectively to support learning. To further build on this good practice, teachers should engage more regularly in field trips and science trails to enhance pupils’ experience of Science in their local environment.

Overall, the quality of teachers’ practice was good; this ranged from fair to very good in the lessons observed. Most teachers prepared well for lessons and used a good range of teaching approaches. In a small number of settings, there was scope for teachers to structure lessons more effectively to ensure pupils’ scientific skills were being developed appropriately.

Where practice was of a very high standard, pupils’ ideas were used as a starting point and teachers modelled and elicited high-quality scientific language. Teacher questioning was used very effectively to extend pupils’ scientific knowledge and skills during investigations. Such practice should be shared and modelled to ensure that the teaching of Science is consistent at whole-school level. All teachers should prepare meaningful and challenging learning activities to support the development of pupils’ investigative skills and their skills in Designing and making.

It is commendable that teachers have engaged in collaborative planning for the subject. However, the standard of teachers’ fortnightly planning was varied. All teachers’ planning should outline clear learning objectives and specific learner activities for Science lessons.

The overall quality of assessment was fair, with elements of good practice observed. The range of assessment strategies evident during the evaluation included teacher observation, teacher tasks, photographic evidence and concept mapping. Practices in relation to the assessment of learning for the subject were limited and not systematic. The school itself has identified assessment as an area for improvement. Going forward, whole-school approaches to the assessment of learning and assessment for learning should be agreed and implemented.

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

The overall quality of whole-school planning is very good. The school has reviewed teaching and learning in Science at whole-school level recently. Areas for further improvement have been
identified; these include a focus on activities in *Designing and making* and on STEM. Very high-quality teaching resources have been compiled by the science co-ordinator to support this process. A well-resourced science room has been developed by school management. To build on such very good developments, a list of activities in *Designing and making* and science trails should be outlined for each class level. The specific language for each strand unit of the science curriculum should also be identified.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

This inspection gave us an opportunity to reflect upon and identify the areas of strength in Science such as pupils’ learning being good overall with commendable learner experiences across the strands i.e. Myself, Energy and Forces, Materials and Environmental Awareness and Care. We were reassured that our pupils’ learning and their use of Scientific Language during discussions, investigative activities and collaborative work have resulted in a commendable standard. We are delighted to note that parental and community expertise that supports delivery of STEM in our school. Our own experiences also show us that pupils’ learning in Science has been greatly enhanced through play using AISTEAR. The board of management is very fortunate to have a parents’ association that supported the refurbishment of our Science Room. This inviting space has allowed for discovery play and open investigations. We will continue to engage in collaborative planning amongst staff.

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 inspection clarified areas for further development:

The Strand Living Things in relation to the local environment has now been recognised as an area for further improvement. Following, the recommendations delivered at our feedback we have developed a local study plan which will ensure pupils gain the opportunity to study local flora and fauna in the school’s local environment. School-personalised class posters have since been developed as a focused resource to prepare the pupils to partake in local science trails.

Following the inspection, class groups have evaluated the learning activities which were being provided to our pupils. This resulted in a revision of our two-year plan to include more challenging designing and making activities. Investment from management was provided for STEM resources which will increase pupil active experimentation, investigation and evaluation.

Prior to the inspection the school had identified assessment and planning as areas for review. This was in process during the inspection and will continue to be a focus for the school across subjects.

The above responses to the recommendations will ensure that the school will be able to strengthen the pupils’ learning opportunities from September 2019. We were encouraged that the pupil learner experiences were commendable and found the recommendations to be very practical and worthwhile. We look forward to implementing our updated Science Plan in the coming school year.
# 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></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 <strong>very good</strong> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>