An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Convent Of Mercy N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Upper Bridge Street Belturbet Co. Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16057S

Date of inspection: 14-03-2019

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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 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.

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	14-03-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview	• Observation of teaching and learning • Review of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback meetings with the principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Convent of Mercy National School is a co-educational school located in the town of Belturbet, Co. Cavan. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. There are 161 pupils currently enrolled. The school has six mainstream teachers. There are two full-time special educational needs teachers based in the school and one shared with another school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning in Geography is very good; they demonstrated enjoyment of the subject and a good knowledge of what they had learned.
- The quality of learner experiences in Geography are notable; pupils enjoy a range of experiences relating to their locality and the environment.
- The quality of teaching is very effective; teachers provided pupils with regular opportunities to engage in collaborative learning.
- The quality of assessment is very good, although the monitoring of pupils' geographical skills has not yet been developed on a whole-school basis.
- Whole-school planning is of a very high quality; plans are supportive of teachers' individual and collaborative practice.

RECOMMENDATION

- To further develop the assessment and monitoring practices of the school, more emphasis should be placed on the incremental development of pupils' skills in Geography on a whole-school basis.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupil learning is very good. Pupils can speak with confidence about their learning. They are highly motivated and engage in their learning activities with enthusiasm and diligence. The pupils have ownership in their learning and display positive dispositions such as curiosity and co-operation. Their understanding of the curricular content of the strand on *Environmental awareness and care* is praiseworthy and a particular strength of the school.

Pupils have a very good knowledge of the geographical features of the locality and the amenities in their local area, including the use of nature walks, trails and tours. Pupils also have a well-developed sense of place and can describe the plant and animal life of their locality well. Pupils in all classes are developing mapping skills; in the majority of classes observed, pupils use map symbols with confidence.

A review of pupils' work indicates their engagement in a range of exemplary activities across a number of strands of the curriculum with particular emphasis on *Environmental awareness and care*. Displays showcase activities that have enriched the pupils' learning in an integrated manner; these include the annual Fair Day and planting in the outdoor flower beds. Photographs are used extensively to document and reflect on learning activities. Online blogs are used in all classes to capture and share the pupils' learning experiences with the community. The use of digital learning technologies should be further developed within the teaching of Geography to enhance the development of the pupils' geographical skills, to include recording, communicating, investigating and experimenting.

Pupils have opportunity to develop their leadership skills and understanding of geographical concepts through their engagement in the Green Schools environmental programme. It is commendable that positions on the Green School committee are rotated to optimise the involvement of pupils. Pupils undertake leadership roles both within school and in the community as members of the Zero Waste Belturbet local initiative and these experiences make a valuable contribution to their learning.

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

The quality of teachers' practice is very good. Teachers plan and prepare for lessons diligently. They use a variety of different teaching approaches very effectively and develop pupils' active listening skills. Teachers provide well-structured lessons and use a suitable range of questioning and prompting skills to establish meaningful connections with previous learning and to elicit pupils' prior knowledge and understanding.

Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to work in pairs and in groups and skilfully facilitate their collaborative learning. In the focus group discussion, pupils also spoke of their enjoyment in doing independent research. Teachers recognise the incidental opportunities that arise and use these purposefully to extend the learning of the pupils. The pupils are provided with many opportunities to engage in appropriate learning activities outside the classroom and could relate the purposes of these activities to their learning.

There is good collaboration evident among staff throughout the school. Teachers are highly effective in sharing good practice with one another. The learning environment is supportive of learning. There is a high degree of community involvement in the Geography programme with expertise being drawn from the parents and the community as a whole.

The quality of assessment overall is very effective. There is very good use of a range of assessment strategies with an emphasis on pupil-led, formative assessment. Pupils are equipped with the skills to reflect on their own learning and to share it with others. Very good assessment practice was observed in one particular setting relating to the incremental development of the skills in Geography over the course of a unit of work. This practice should be developed throughout the school to assess and monitor pupils' skills development including questioning, observing, analysing and predicting in Geography.

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

Curriculum planning in Geography is very good. The skills and concepts of the curriculum are outlined clearly. The content for each class level is identified. This supports the individual practice of teachers. The *Digital Learning Framework* has been implemented and a digital learning plan is in place with clear targets identified relating to the recording of learning activities and facilitation of formative feedback.

There is a culture of improvement regarding teaching and learning established in the school with teachers providing support to one another. The principal encourages and fosters a climate of distributed leadership within the staff.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M. of the Convent of Mercy N.S., welcome the report received, following our Subject Evaluation on Geography.

Tá Bord Bainistíochta Scoil Chlochar na Trócaire thar a bheith sásta go n-aithníonn an tuairisc tír-eolaíochta dea-oibre na scoile.

We welcome the positivity of the report and the affirmation of the very high quality and effectiveness of the teaching and learning, the varied and integrated learning experiences of the children and the involvement of the local community depicted by the extensive photographic evidence and blogs.

The report clearly identified the culture of Collaborative Learning and Practice in the school through the pupils in their learning, the teachers in their planning & teaching and the principal in her leadership. The B.O.M. welcome the recognition afforded to the principal for her fostering and encouragement of distributed leadership amongst the staff and pupils.

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

Tacaíonn an Bord Bainistíochta le moladh na tuairisce and táimid ag obair leis an bhfoireann teagaisc, chomh maith leis na tuismitheoirí agus na daltaí, chun an moladh, a chur i bhfeidhm, i bplean forbartha na scoile.

The B.O.M. acknowledge and accept the recommendation of the report and in keeping with our well established culture of School Self Evaluation and continuous improvement and development, we will incorporate this recommendation into our 3 year plan.

We will endeavour to address it through our review of both our geography plan and our overall assessment and recording policy thus further informing and developing our future classroom practice.

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 *very good* 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;

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