An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Geography
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Edenderry Convent N S
Seoladh na scoile/School address	School Lane Edenderry Co. Offaly
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	16013V
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19-09-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	15/11/2023

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* and the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019).* 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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in [Subject] under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning outrcomes through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
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.	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* and this policy is reviewed annually. 2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the *Procedures*) since the previous report to the board. 3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.

The school met the requirements in relation to checks 1 and 3 of the child protection checks. It did not meet the requirements of check 2 of the child protection checks. Responsibility for ensuring the school is fully compliant with this check rests with the board of management. The Inspectorate will monitor the board's progress in achieving full compliance. The school met all the requirements in relation to the anti-bullying checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	19-09-2023
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

Edenderry Convent National School is a Catholic, co-educational urban primary school located in Edenderry, Co. Offaly. It caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It operates under the patronage of the bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The staff comprised an administrative principal, eighteen mainstream class teachers and eight special education teachers. At the time of the evaluation, the school had two early-intervention classes for pupils with autism and there were 426 pupils enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of learner outcomes was good. Pupils shared their learning confidently across a range of strands including *Human environments* and *Natural environments* and demonstrated good levels of knowledge of their wider county, region and province.
- The quality of learner experiences was good.
- Teachers' practice was good. Teachers created stimulating learning environments which supported pupils' learning in Geography.
- Assessment practices in Geography were good.
- The quality of school planning was good. The school plan for Geography provided effective guidance for teachers in delivering the curriculum across all class levels.

Recommendations

- To ensure that pupils' knowledge of the external school environment and the local urban area is developed, all pupils should have opportunities to explore and investigate the local environment.
- As some pupils were less confident in making connections between their learning in Geography and real-life situations, teachers should encourage all pupils to apply their geographical skills and knowledge to the outside world.
- To further support the development of pupils' sense of place, teachers should conduct an environmental audit of the school and local area, and use this audit to plan environmental studies on an incremental basis.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The quality of learning in Geography was good. Pupils shared their learning confidently across strands of the curriculum, including *Human environments* and *Natural environments*. They demonstrated good levels of knowledge of their wider county, region and province. Pupils identified main towns and features, such as boglands, the Grand Canal and windfarms. They

understood the roles of people working in the school and living in the local area. In general, pupils demonstrated less awareness of the physical and natural features of the external school environment and the local urban area. To ensure that pupils' knowledge of the school environment and the local area is developed, all pupils should have opportunities to explore and investigate the local environment.

Many pupils demonstrated confidence in creating simple maps, conducting investigations and making predictions. They made meaningful connections between their learning in Geography and other curriculum subjects, such as Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), English, History, Science and Mathematics. In general, pupils were less confident in making connections between their learning in Geography and real-life situations. Teachers should encourage all pupils to apply their geographical skills and knowledge to the outside world. The majority of pupils had not investigated, measured and recorded weather conditions. There is a need to further develop pupils' knowledge and skills in the strand unit of *Weather*.

Pupils demonstrated an awareness of aerial perspective and had investigated rocks and soils and recorded their findings. They were able to describe, classify, draw and label rock types. Pupils were encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards the environment. Some pupils were actively involved in the school garden and all pupils were involved in maintaining the school grounds. Some pupils were less aware of the school's involvement in the Green Schools Programme or the current priorities of the school in relation to environmental awareness.

2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learner experiences and teachers' practice

The quality of learner experiences was good. All interactions were supportive. Pupils accessed a broad range of content from the Geography curriculum. They used resources such as maps, globes, photographs, pictures and digital technologies to support their learning in Geography. In the pupil focus group discussion, pupils reported that they enjoyed Geography lessons, most notably, project work and conducting fieldtrips to the canal. They expressed a desire for more active learning and further opportunities to learn outdoors. Pupils celebrated the diversity of pupils within classes through the exploration of cultures and human and natural features of other lands.

The quality of teaching was good. Teachers created stimulating learning environments which supported and celebrated pupils' learning in Geography. They revised prior learning with pupils and used suitable resources such as maps, presentations and photographs to introduce the focus of new learning content. Teachers' preparation was of a high standard and they provided appropriately structured and well-paced lessons. Teachers demonstrated very good classroom management skills. They used open-ended questioning effectively to stimulate whole-class discussions and they differentiated tasks to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers placed commendable focus on teaching subject-specific language and terminology. In some instances, teachers provided valuable opportunities for pupils to use the language taught. This very good practice should be extended to all settings.

Teachers used curriculum-appropriate approaches, such as field trips to the canal, interviews with people who lived and worked in the local area, project work and digital learning to support pupils' learning in Geography. In the main, lessons were teacher-led. Teachers should provide pupils with further opportunities to actively work together to make observations, conduct investigations, solve problems and record their findings. Assessment practices were good. Teachers gathered useful data in copies, teacher-designed tasks, work samples, checklists and projects. This data was used to monitor progress and teachers provided formative feedback to pupils on their work. In many settings, pupils used self and peer-assessment strategies with confidence. This good practice should be extended across all class levels.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

The quality of school planning was good. The school plan for Geography provided effective guidance for teachers in delivering the curriculum across all class levels. The plan included specific incremental content from all strands and identified areas for field trips outside the town and a list of geographical resources. To further support the development of pupils' sense of place, it is recommended that teachers conduct an environmental audit of the school and local area, and use this audit to plan environmental studies on an incremental basis. The culture of collaborative reflection among leaders and teachers impacted positively on the pupils' wellbeing and learning.

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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Primary School is very pleased with the recent report.

The Board commends our staff and pupils on the positive findings which acknowledges and affirms good practices currently in place in the school in relation to the quality of pupils' learning, teachers' practice, and school planning.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board of Management accepts the guidance outlined within the report and is committed to implementing the recommendations. The report has many positive things to say about the teaching and learning in Geography in the school. Its recommendations are constructive and practical and should enhance the good work that is already being carried out.

The Board supports the staff in achieving high quality teaching and learning throughout the school while the school management team is looking at the best ways to take the inspector's recommendations on board.