An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	S N Rath Chaomhghin
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Rathkeevin, Clonmel Co Tipperary
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17542H

Date of Evaluation: 08-06-2017

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 inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in Science under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning 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.

Curriculum Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	08-06-2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal • 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

Rathkeevin NS is a co-educational mainstream school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school has a staff of six teachers one of whom provides support to pupils with learning difficulties. At the time of the evaluation there were 128 pupils enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and high levels of motivation towards their learning in Science.
- Pupils effectively use topic-specific vocabulary to recall and describe their knowledge and understanding of topics they have explored in Science, particularly in relation to *Living Things*.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; however, there remains a need to ensure that an emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' scientific skills, particularly in designing and making.
- The current whole-school plan does not reflect the school context or provide effective guidance on the teaching of Science.
- At the time of the evaluation, confirmation was not provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification or that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teacher planning and practice for Science should provide pupils with opportunities to actively develop their scientific skills through increased use of investigations and designing and making opportunities.
- A comprehensive review of the whole-school plan for Science should be initiated in order to provide greater guidance to teachers and ensure appropriate provision for progress in pupil learning.
- As a matter of priority, the school should formally adopt the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and ensure its compliance with the guidelines.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning in Science is generally good. During lessons observed and in group discussions, pupils used topic-specific vocabulary to describe their learning. They recall and communicate key aspects of their learning and demonstrate a good knowledge of the strand *Living Things*. Pupils have opportunities to integrate literacy and numeracy skills into their learning in Science.
- Pupils are positively disposed to their learning in Science and are particularly motivated when working collaboratively on scientific investigations. In some lessons, they engaged in activities targeted at developing their scientific skills. Consideration should now be given to providing further opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of working scientifically and to applying the knowledge and skills acquired to designing and making tasks.

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

- The quality of teaching is of a good standard, overall. Pupils are facilitated to engage in practical investigations which extend their scientific learning. However, greater use of the immediate environment and pupils' existing ideas as a starting point for science activities is recommended. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively and to discuss and reflect on their learning. Varied methodologies enable learners to actively engage in development of scientific knowledge. In the course of a focus group interview, pupils report that they enjoy their learning most when they are facilitated to engage in hands-on investigations and when their learning is linked to real life situations.
- All teachers prepare long and short-term planning in preparation for their work. The quality of this planning varies from fair to very good. High standards of planning were evident when key vocabulary was identified, opportunities for investigating were outlined and explicit reference was made to the development of skills through content. There is, however, a need to ensure that increased emphasis is placed on the active development of pupils' scientific skills, particularly in designing and making. Pupils would be further supported in their learning through provision of a balanced approach to the exploration of the strands and opportunities to return to strand units on a cyclical basis.
- Some monitoring of pupils' progress in Science was evident including the use of teacher designed summative assessments. The school should identify whole-school approaches to assessment that adequately identify pupils' attainment of scientific skills and knowledge to inform future learning experiences.
- The quality of support for pupils is good. Information and communication technologies was effectively used to support pupil learning and engagement in Science lessons. Strong emphasis was placed on the use of stimulating visuals to support pupil understanding of concepts, particularly in relation to human life. Very good focus was placed on the development of pupils' scientific vocabulary. A range of resources including sensory tools, models of the human body, magnets, circuits and sound equipment were used effectively to support teaching and learning. Increased opportunities for pupils to engage with these resources would further support their learning.

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

- The quality of whole-school planning for Science requires significant development. The whole school plan should reflect the school context to a greater degree. A comprehensive review of the current school plan is advised. The reviewed plan should facilitate enhanced science provision in classroom settings. As part of this process, consideration should be given to ensuring continuity and progression in pupil's learning, the enabling of pupils to experience a broad and balanced Science curriculum and the outlining of strategies to assess and record their progress.

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 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

1. The BOM of Rathkeevin N.S. are delighted that the inspectorate commented positively upon the quality of pupils' learning in the school, as well as noting their positive disposition towards learning and their particular motivation when working collaboratively in Science.

2. The Board are also delighted that the standard of teaching is good overall and is supported by long and short term planning and the quality of support for pupils is also good while acknowledging there is further scope for assessment and evaluation.

3. The Board does acknowledge that the current Whole School Science Plan needs to be revisited.

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

1. The Principal & Staff revisited the Whole School Plan for Science using the CPD Guidelines to include a comprehensive review of the school physical environment and the scientific educational opportunities it offers.

2. Continuity and progression in pupil's learning will be examined at staff meetings.

3. Assessment and recording of pupil's progression will also be further examined.

CHILD PROTECTION

At a special meeting of the BOM of Rathkeevin N.S. held on 30/08/'17, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools was adopted without modification and compliance with same was emphasised.

This included an updating of personnel functions and taking note of all relevant documentation.