An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil na mBráthar
Seoladh na scoile / School address	North Brunswick Street Dublin 7
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16695E

Date of inspection: 10-01-2018

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 inspector(s) 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.

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	10-01-2018
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

Scoil na mBráthar enrols boys from second to sixth class. There are 165 pupils enrolled currently with a teaching staffing of an administrative principal, eight mainstream teachers, four special education teachers (SETs) and an additional SET on a shared basis. The school participates in Delivering Quality of Outcomes in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning in Geography is good; they demonstrated a commendable and lively interest in the subject and a good knowledge of what they have learned.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills extend across the strands and strand units of the geography curriculum; however, pupils' knowledge of particular aspects of physical geography, such as rocks and soils, and their knowledge of local geography was not satisfactory and needs to be developed greatly.
- The quality of learner experiences is good; the majority of observed lessons stimulated pupils' curiosity in a very effective way and the majority of teachers created well-structured, engaging lessons.
- The school is very successful in providing a broad range of opportunities for engaging with Geography through a number of co-curricular initiatives such as the *Green Schools* programme and the *Fís* film project.
- While all teachers monitor pupils' written work, there is a lack of formative feedback provided to pupils; a few teachers, however, were observed to use checklists effectively to provide a good overview of pupil attainment in certain strand units.
- Individual teacher planning is effective in outlining planned learning for pupils; notwithstanding this, there is scope to make further use of monthly progress records to consolidate and extend learning from previous years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Measures should be put in place to ensure that strand units within the strands of the geography curriculum are implemented comprehensively with continuity and progression from year to year.
- Teachers should provide pupils with more detailed formative feedback on their progress in Geography; the more widespread use of checklists for both content and skills will assist teachers in this regard.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in Geography is good. During the evaluation, pupils demonstrated a lively interest in Geography and a good knowledge of what they have learned. Pupils demonstrated a very good capacity to describe how their geographical investigation skills, including mapping, are developing. The particular emphasis placed by most teachers on the systematic teaching of geographical vocabulary is proving very effective. Pupils did not demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the strand unit *Rocks and soils* nor did they demonstrate breadth and progression in their knowledge of Dublin as their local area. To address this, teachers should review the school plan to ensure that all strand units of the curriculum are taught in a broad and balanced manner with due regard to continuity and progression from class to class. While provision is made for the study of people and other lands and the school holds regular International Days to celebrate the cultural diversity represented in the school, the school plan lacks sufficient direction on how countries are selected for study. As the school plan is amended to provide this further direction, the heritage countries of the pupil population should figure more prominently in the school's provision.

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

The quality of pupils' learner experiences in Geography is good. The school is very effective in providing pupils with a broad range of interesting and active co-curricular learning experiences such as the *Green Schools Programme* and *Fís*. These learning experiences involve pupils effectively in authentic and collaborative investigation and problem-solving tasks; these tasks are proving to be very stimulating for pupils and resulting in very good quality learning. All observed lessons had clear objectives and involved the use of interesting visual resources and active learning methodologies. In a few instances, the more deliberate use of a purpose question to guide pupils in their engagement with these worthwhile resources would enhance pupils' learning from these resources.

The majority of observed lessons were very effective in stimulating pupils' curiosity and the majority of teachers were very effective in guiding pupils through well-structured and engaging lessons. In most instances, teachers used questioning very effectively to accommodate varying pupil ability levels. While all teachers monitor pupils' written work, the provision of worthwhile formative feedback is evident in only a few instances. There is, therefore, potential to develop this further. Examples of checklists to monitor the attainment of content objectives and to monitor skill development are in evidence; it would be useful to extend their use more widely throughout the school. Individual teacher planning is effective in outlining planned learning for pupils; however, teachers make insufficient use of monthly progress records to consolidate and extend learning from previous years.

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

In general, while the school plan outlines how a broad and balanced approach underpins the teaching of Geography throughout the school, further direction should be provided to teachers on how pupils' learning about Dublin as their local area should be developed as they progress through the school and how areas contrasting with Dublin should be selected for study. Further guidance could also be provided on how European Union (EU) and non-EU countries should be selected for study with due regard to the heritage countries of the pupil population. Teachers' approach to implementing the *Green Schools Programme* provides evidence that good collaborative work

practices exist between teachers and that the principles of school self-evaluation are well embedded into these collaborative work practices.

While the school reported that it is not engaging currently in the school self-evaluation process due to industrial action, the self-evaluation process has remained central to its planning for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS); this is an action plan of the Department of Education and Skills to achieve educational inclusion.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management and staff of St. Paul's CBS Primary School welcome this positive report. We are pleased with the overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes and experiences in Geography and that the report affirms the strong commitment by the staff to the continual improvement of the teaching and learning of Geography in the school. We look forward to implementing the recommendations in the report. We accept that the recommendations will enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The board is confident that these high standards will be maintained and further developed in the coming years.

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 school will begin the process of addressing the recommendations in the report by;

1. Reviewing our whole-school plan – endeavouring to ensure that the strand units within the strands of the geography curriculum are implemented comprehensively with continuity and progression from year to year. We will develop the existing plan in line with the inspection report.
2. Developing a whole-school approach to assessment of the pupils' knowledge and skills across the strands of the geography curriculum to provide pupils with more formative feedback.

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;