An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Geography
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Fhiachna
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Kenmare Road Glengarriff Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19420D
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	21-09-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	28/11/2023

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 evaluated learning and teaching in Geography under the following headings:

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

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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>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.</td></tr>
</table>

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

.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	21-09-2023
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

SN Fhiachna is a co-educational primary school located in Glengarriff, Co Cork. It operates under the patronage of the Bishop of Kerry. At the time of the evaluation, there were seventy pupils enrolled in the school. Staffing included three mainstream class teachers, one of whom was the teaching principal and there was one special education teacher.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of learning was good overall.
- The quality of pupils' learning experiences was commendable and outdoor spaces, including the immediate school environment, were used effectively to support pupils' learning.
- The overall quality of teaching was good.
- The quality of assessment was satisfactory with different approaches implemented in each of the classrooms.
- Whole school planning for Geography was adequate with scope for further development.

Recommendations

- A general whole-school plan had been prepared for Geography. Teachers should work together to further develop this plan, to ensure that it is more closely aligned to the school's multi-grade context and informs a coordinated approach to classroom planning, teaching and learning.
- Assessment was primarily focussed on pupils' knowledge and understanding of content. Teachers should agree and implement a whole-school approach to the assessment of pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes in Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) and ensure that assessment data informs future learning.
- It was noted, in a minority of settings, that the time allocation for SESE required review. The teachers' timetables should reflect the minimum timeframe for the weekly implementation of the SESE curriculum in all settings.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Geography was good. They enjoyed their lessons and most pupils demonstrated the knowledge, skills and understanding of relevant concepts to a good standard. They had developed a range of geographical skills, displaying an ability to question, investigate, predict and record their learning. Pupils in the junior classes had appropriate mapping and graphical skills and could construct and draw simple maps of their

immediate environment. In the middle and senior classes, pupils had good knowledge of the human and natural features of their local area and used maps, photographs and pictures to support their learning. In senior classes, pupils displayed an appreciation of diverse environments and cultures. They had undertaken research projects and displayed a curiosity in learning about global locations. They also demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of environmental awareness and care and of personal and community responsibility in this regard. Samples of written work and classroom interactions revealed that pupils had a good understanding of topics relating to water consumption and conservation and the interrelationships of people and places. They were involved in litter picking in the local area and were also participating in The Green Schools Programme. While some pupils had an acceptable knowledge of rocks and soils and climate, there was scope to further develop their learning in these strands of the curriculum. As a next stage in development, it is recommended the school builds on the good practice noted in some strands, in individual classes, by implementing a more coordinated approach to implementing the SESE curriculum throughout the school.

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

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. In most settings, they had opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively. Geography was integrated with work in other curriculum areas throughout the school. In the junior room, play-based methodologies were utilised effectively to integrate pupils' learning in SESE. Pupils in all settings, had opportunities to engage in relevant fieldtrips around the local area. These experiences enabled them to make connections between lesson material and its real-world application. To further extend pupils' learning experiences, the school should explore the option of inviting guest speakers to present to pupils on aspects of the rich natural and built environs. Pupils had some opportunities to work collaboratively on projects and engage in dialogue which reinforced their questioning, investigating, recording and communicating skills. In the senior room, a highly engaging and interactive lesson on *Human environments* in France, used information and communications technology (ICT) very effectively to complement whole-class teaching and collaborative quizzes reinforced pupils' learning.

In the pupils' focus group, they spoke of how they enjoyed learning in Geography when it was integrated with their interests, which included sports and the solar system. They also liked developing their digital skills through engaging in research and curriculum-based quiz activities.

The quality of teachers' practice in Geography was good overall. Classroom displays included maps to support pupils' learning. Project work, which involved pupils' research and investigation activities, was on display in classrooms. The development of literacy and numeracy skills was integrated into geography lessons in junior classes. Teachers used a range of approaches, to varying degrees, including field trips, investigations and project work to develop pupils' knowledge. Most pupils were enabled to participate actively in lessons and teachers encouraged them to ask questions. In some settings, there was scope to develop the approach to teaching Geography and there was a need to ensure that the curriculum was effectively differentiated to support all learners in multi-grade classes.

All teachers had prepared general long-term and short-term planning to support curriculum implementation. Short-term planning should be further developed to include clear objectives for the content to be taught and skills to be developed across each strand unit. These learning objectives should be shared with pupils at the outset of lessons to promote enhanced ownership of and responsibility for their own learning. It was noted, in a minority of settings, that the time allocation for SESE required review. The teachers' timetables should reflect the minimum timeframe for the weekly implementation of the SESE curriculum in all settings.

The quality of assessment was satisfactory with different approaches noted in each of the classrooms. These included teacher observation, some pupil self-assessment and compilations of work samples. Assessment was mainly focussed on pupils knowledge and understanding of content. To further develop practice in this area, teachers should collectively develop whole-

school approaches to the assessment of pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes in SESE and ensure that assessment data informs future learning

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

The quality of school planning was satisfactory. A whole-school plan for Geography had been developed by staff, which contained a broad outline of strands and skills to be covered at each stage of the curriculum. To enhance the effectiveness of the plan in guiding teaching and learning, teachers should collaboratively review the document, to ensure that it is more closely aligned to the particular context of the school and reflects its multi-grade settings in particular. It should specify the content to be addressed and skills to be developed in a structured and incremental manner to ensure that significant gaps and undue repetition are avoided An environmental audit of available resources to complement the implementation of the Geography curriculum should be included in the plan.

Geography had not been chosen as a priority for school self-evaluation (SSE). A previous cycle of SSE focused on comprehension strategies and the school reported improvements in this area. The incidental use of Irish was the focus of SSE in the previous school year and the school had identified a need for renewed focus on this area of learning. The cycle in place, at the time of the evaluation, placed a focus on wellbeing and pupil participation and commendably, the school was in the process of electing a student council.

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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management is pleased to note the positive commentary regarding the observations made by the inspectorate in the report issued on 10/11/2023.
The Board welcomes the positive findings in the report which acknowledge the good practice currently in place in the school.
We are very pleased with the positive comments in the report in relation to the commendable quality learning experiences provided for the pupils and the recognition of the good quality of teaching.
The pupils of Scoil Fhiachna are very proud of the positive comments in relation to their learning and work. The staff of Scoil Fhiachna acknowledges the evaluation process and report as a valuable experience in their on-going development as professionals.
The Board considers this report to be an affirmation of the good work being carried on in our school and a solid basis for further development.

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 Board of Management and staff recognise and accept the recommendations that were made in the Curriculum Evaluation and are happy to implement the recommendations. Time allocations for SESE have been reviewed and now all class timetables reflect the minimum timeframe for the implantation of the SESE curriculum.
The whole school approach to assessment will be developed to include assessment practices to further enhance learning opportunities in Scoil Fhiachna to access pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes in Social Environmental and Scientific Education.
Short term planning will be enhanced to include clear objectives for the content to be taught and skills to be developed and these will be shared with the pupils at the outset of lessons to promote enhanced ownership of and responsibility for their own learning.
A thorough review of our Geography Policy has commenced with the staff collaboratively reviewing our policy and have specified the content to be addressed and skills to be developed in a structured and incremental manner reflecting our school environment. A plan is in place to extend this review to other subject areas in SESE later this year.
An audit of local areas of geographical interest has been conducted and an audit of resources in our school will be compiled before Christmas. To further extend pupils' learning experiences we will avail of the wealth of local knowledge and will invite guest speakers to present to the pupils on aspects of the rich natural and built environs both locally and in the wider environment.
The Board of Management will support the school staff in the implementation of whatever changes are deemed necessary.