An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Joseph's N.S.
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Donard Poulpeasty Clonroche, Enniscorthy Co Wexford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17638U

Date of inspection: 27-11-2018

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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 inspector(s) evaluated learning and teaching in [Subject] 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; a response was not received from the board.

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	27-11-2018
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

St Joseph's National School is a vertical co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. Currently, there are four mainstream classrooms catering for seventy-six pupils from infants to sixth class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning in Science is good and pupils are motivated and interested learners; there is scope for pupils to reflect further on their learning in Science.
- High quality learning experiences which are varied and authentic are provided for the pupils.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, with some instances of very good practice observed.
- The school has forged strong links with the community in order to promote pupils' learning in Science.
- The principal promotes a culture of improvement and collaboration among staff and teachers have a good level of subject knowledge in Science.
- A good quality whole-school plan is in place; there is scope to develop and contextualise this plan to further guide teaching and pupils' progression in learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regular and consistent opportunities for pupils to report and reflect on their learning in Science should be provided for all pupils
- In order to further support pupils' progression in learning from class to class, the school should identify and implement agreed benchmarks for pupils' learning and specify learning experiences across strands and strand units at each class band.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupils' learning in Science is good. Pupils enjoy their learning and are motivated and interested learners. They have a well-developed understanding of living things in a range of habitats and can discuss strategies for improving and caring for the environment. Pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of the topics taught in the lessons observed and had some opportunities to describe their learning. In order to ensure that their scientific skills are being incrementally developed, regular and consistent opportunities for pupils to report and reflect on their learning in Science should be provided for all pupils.

During the evaluation, pupils engaged in activities targeted at developing their scientific skills, including designing and making tasks. In the course of a focus-group interview, pupils report that they enjoy their learning best when they are facilitated to engage in hands-on investigations and when their learning is linked to real-life situations. They could explain the application of Science in familiar contexts and could identify how it contributes to society. Pupils expressed a desire to further apply their knowledge and skills in open-ended investigations.

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

High quality learning experiences which are varied and authentic are provided for the pupils. Information and communication technologies are effectively used to support pupil learning and engagement. A strong emphasis is placed on the use of a wide range of resources to support pupils' understanding of concepts. Strong links have been forged with the community and the immediate school environment in order to promote pupils' learning in Science. These include trips and talks by visiting speakers, the use of the school garden, poly tunnel and engineering projects to encourage an appreciation of and engagement with Science.

Pupils have opportunities to integrate literacy and numeracy skills into their scientific learning. Science is also integrated very effectively with other curricular areas, including Music. A very good focus is placed on the development of pupils' scientific vocabulary. In some classrooms and school circulation areas, displays and projects attractively record the range of interesting scientific activities and experiences which pupils experience. There is scope to further develop all learning environments to reflect and scaffold pupils' learning in Science.

The overall quality of teaching is good, with some instances of very good practice observed. Lessons are generally well-structured, with good links to previous learning, attention to questioning and clear communication. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively and actively engage in practical investigations which extend their scientific learning. Where this was most successful, pupils worked on suitably challenging tasks and persisted well with their learning to solve a problem and discover new learning.

The principal promotes a culture of improvement and collaboration among staff. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge in Science and are open to embracing new initiatives and ideas. All teachers prepare long and short-term plans for their work. A variety of strategies is used to monitor pupils' progress in Science, including teacher-designed tasks and tests, assessment portfolios, work samples, and pupils' self-assessment samples. In order to develop pupils' critical thinking skills further, a greater emphasis on providing formative feedback to pupils on how to improve their work is advised.

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

The quality of the whole-school planning for Science is good overall. While a good quality whole-school plan is in place, there is scope to develop and contextualise this plan to further guide teaching and learning. In order to further support pupils' progression in learning from class to class, the school should identify and implement agreed benchmarks for pupils' learning and specify learning experiences across strands and strand units at the various class levels.

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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