

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	S N Sean Baile Mor
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Shanballymore Mallow Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	03704E

Date of inspection: 07-03-2018



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 evaluated learning and teaching in Science 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.

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	07-03-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Shanballymore National School is a co-education, primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne. It caters for 79 pupils ranging from junior infants to sixth class. It has a staffing of a teaching principal and two mainstream teachers. Two teachers, one of whom is part-time, provide support for pupils with learning difficulties.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning in Science is very good overall.
- The quality of support for pupil learning is high; learners engage in a rich range of learning experiences and initiatives; the provision of increased opportunities for pupils to engage in designing and making activities would further develop their scientific knowledge.
- Whole-school planning is of a good quality and facilitates a spiral approach to curriculum coverage with opportunities to consolidate conceptual understanding; scope exists to refine short-term planning to ensure comprehensive progression in learning outcomes.
- Teachers employ a range of approaches to assess pupils' learning in Science; a whole-school approach to assessment of learning and assessment for learning would enhance provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increased opportunities should be provided for pupils to engage in open-ended, problem-solving tasks in the context of designing and making.
- Short-term planning approaches require review in order to ensure consistent focus on provision for and progression of learner outcomes in terms of scientific concepts and skills.
- Assessment practices should be developed to facilitate the systematic evaluation of pupils' progress and attainment of scientific concepts and skills and to inform future learning experiences for pupils.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning is very good overall. Pupils are enthusiastic, confident learners who derive much enjoyment from their scientific endeavours. They have developed very positive attitudes towards their learning in Science and demonstrated confidence and competence when speaking about their understanding of topics explored. In a focus-group interview conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils spoke of the range of opportunities they are afforded to apply and extend their learning in Science. Opportunities mentioned included trails and tours, engagement with guest speakers, experiences of rearing chickens onsite, involvement in the school garden and their Young Scientist project. Learners also effectively expressed their understanding of what it means to 'work like a scientist'.
- From junior Infants to sixth class, highly effective emphasis is placed on the meaningful development of the scientific knowledge and attitudes required for citizenship. All pupils are actively involved in the Green Flag initiative and they competently connect the merits of their involvement with this initiative to their lives outside of school.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' learning is high. Pupils demonstrate positive dispositions and a sense of curiosity towards their scientific learning. Their ideas and opinions are actively sought and meaningfully affirmed. Teachers use a range of approaches and methodologies to ensure lessons are stimulating and interesting. A good balance of whole-class discussion, collaborative work and independent reflection was observed during the evaluation. Resources are prepared and presented to learners in ways that captivate learners' interest and stimulate their learning. In classroom environments, pupils' work in Science is affirmed and consolidated through the provision of attractive, language-rich visual displays. Information and communications technology (ICT) is successfully used to provide images and videos that scaffold, enhance and extend learner experiences.
- In each classroom, teachers provided opportunities for pupils to engage in hands-on tasks which enable learners understand for themselves the concept being developed. During the evaluation, some tasks also inspired pupils to formulate their own questions and identify areas for further enquiry. Teachers tailor learning experiences in Science to provide pupils with opportunities to apply and extend their literacy and numeracy skills. High emphasis is placed on supporting pupils to develop topic-specific vocabulary in Science. The integration of writing genres with Science learning is commended. Practical investigations also foster the application of measurement concepts.
- All teachers prepare long and short-term planning which is of a good quality overall. Highly effective practice was evident when appropriate emphasis was placed on development of learner outcomes in terms of skills and content. The development of a consistent approach to individual planning which emphasises learner outcomes is recommended. Teachers employ a range of assessment strategies to determine pupil progress in Science but practice in this area would benefit from whole-school approaches to the assessment of and for pupil learning.
- Playful learning experiences which facilitate both incidental and planned acquisition of scientific skills are very effectively implemented in junior classes. Across the school, pupils have opportunities to engage in some designing and making tasks. Systematic provision for greater engagement in open-ended designing and making tasks should be promoted. This should enable pupils to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to practical open-ended problem solving tasks.

- Particularly strong emphasis is placed at all levels on enabling pupils connect their learning in Science with real-life applications. The school has identified a desire to further explore the use of local environment in enriching learner experiences.

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

- The quality of whole-school planning for Science is good. The current plan provides useful guidance on key principles of effective teaching of Science. Many aspects of provision highlighted in the whole-school Science plan were strongly evident in classroom practice. The plan provides specific guidance on content coverage aligned to the schools' multi-grade context. A range of assessment strategies are currently identified in the school's Science plan. Whole-school approaches to assessment of learning and assessment for learning, should be developed to facilitate the systematic evaluation of pupils' progress and attainment of scientific concepts and skills and to inform future learning experiences for pupils.
- The school has engaged successfully in the school self-evaluation process. To date improvement initiatives have been focused on other curriculum areas.

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.

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 <i>very good</i> 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;