

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Naomh Micheal
Seoladh na scoile / School address	St. Michael's NS West End, Sneem, Co Kerry
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	08251S

Date of inspection: 18-10-2018



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agus Scileanna**
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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 evaluated learning and teaching 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 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.

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	18-10-2018
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

St Michael's national school is a rural coeducational primary school located in Sneem, Co Kerry. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry and there are currently 71 pupils on roll. Staff consists of a teaching principal, three mainstream class teachers and one special education teacher. The school participates in the rural strand of the school support programme of *Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools* (DEIS).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Pupils' learning in Science is of a high standard and they have regular opportunities to practice their skills and apply their scientific knowledge.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to Science and the school ensures effective support for pupils through the provision of a science-rich environment and facilitating a wide range of learning opportunities.
- The overall quality of teaching in Science lessons observed was very good; there is scope to develop a whole-school approach to assessment.
- Effective use is made of resources and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is a notable feature of provision.
- The school has engaged very effectively in school-self evaluation (SSE) in selected areas of the curriculum but opportunities exist to review the whole-school science plan in order to guide teachers' individual planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should further develop a whole-school approach to assessing and tracking pupils' attainment of learning objectives and skills across the science curriculum.
- The whole-school science plan should be further developed to ensure that it provides guidance to individual teachers in the delivery of broad strand coverage of the curriculum.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The learning achievements of pupils in Science is of a high standard. Pupils are enthusiastic, articulate and confident learners who derive enjoyment from their scientific endeavours. They have developed very positive attitudes towards learning and demonstrate competency and understanding when speaking about the topics explored. They engage in hands-on activities and collaboratively pursue outcomes of investigations. In a focus group conducted as a part of the evaluation, pupils discussed the wide range of opportunities afforded to them to apply and further extend their learning in Science. They spoke positively of trails and tours, visits by guest speakers and their involvement in interesting scientific initiatives. These include the school's acquisition of nine flags under the Green School's programme, the Genius Hour initiative and participation in national competitions in a variety of areas relating to Science. The organisation and provision of these activities contributes significantly to enhanced pupil learning outcomes.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' learning is high. Pupils demonstrate very positive dispositions and a sense of curiosity towards scientific learning is fostered throughout the school. Their ideas and opinions are encouraged and appropriately affirmed. Teachers employ a range of approaches and methodologies which ensure that lessons are stimulating, engaging and interesting. In the lessons observed, a good balance between whole-class discussion, collaborative work and independent reflection was evident. Pupils' project-work and photographic records of work completed are displayed in classrooms and throughout the school. A good emphasis is placed on the development of topic-specific vocabulary in Science. In junior classes, play-based methodologies are used with good effect to enhance the development of pupils' scientific language. A wide range of scientific resources is available to teachers and information and communication technology is used very effectively to support teaching and learning.
- The overall quality of teaching observed was very good. Pupils are facilitated to engage in practical investigations which extend their scientific learning equally across all strands of the curriculum. While the effective use of a problem-solving approach was used in many lessons, in some instances greater use should be made of open-ended investigations to further enrich the quality of learning experiences. Teachers tailor lessons in Science to provide opportunities to pupils to integrate their learning with literacy and numeracy. A good emphasis is also placed on enabling pupils to connect their learning in Science with real-life situations, especially those in the immediate local environment.
- In general, good quality assessment practices were in evidence throughout the school. Teachers employ a range of assessment strategies to determine pupil progress in Science. However, the school should further develop a whole-school approach to assessing and tracking pupils' attainment of learning objectives and skills across the Science curriculum.

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

- The overall quality of school planning is good. The school has engaged very effectively in school-self evaluation (SSE) in other aspects of the curriculum. While all teachers prepare long and short-term planning, there are opportunities to establish greater links between individual teacher planning and the school plan in Science. The whole-school science plan should be further developed to ensure that it provides greater guidance to individual teachers in the delivery of broad strand coverage to the pupils.

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;

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 of St Michael's N.S welcomes the report of our Curriculum Evaluation in Science. We are delighted to see that our pupils' learning in Science is of a high standard and that the quality of teaching in Science in our school is very good.

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 teaching staff of St Michael's National School will now endeavour to further develop a Whole School Approach to assessing and tracking pupils' attainment in learning objectives and skills in Science. Furthermore, our whole school plan will be further developed to ensure that it provides guidance to individual teachers in the delivery of broad strand coverage of the Science curriculum.