

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Michael's National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Corcaghan Stranooden County Monaghan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16129R

Date of inspection: 21-03-2018



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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 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, 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	21-03-2018
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

Saint Michael's National School is a rural, co-educational school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clogher. Teaching staff comprises three mainstream class teachers and one full-time special education teacher. There were sixty-seven pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science is very good and their use of scientific skills is highly commendable.
- High-quality learning experiences are provided for pupils.
- Teaching in Science is of a very high standard.
- Assessment practices are very effective.
- The quality of whole-school planning is good with scope to make better provision for learning in environmental awareness and care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further enrich environmental awareness and learning, the school grounds should be cultivated to facilitate pupils' exploration of flora and fauna and the investigation of a variety of contrasting habitats.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of the pupils' learning in Science is very good. They are motivated to learn through engaging in purposeful, active and collaborative learning activities. They display a very good understanding of working scientifically. Their use of scientific skills such as prediction, investigation, experimentation and interpretation of results is highly developed.

During the evaluation, pupils confidently demonstrated very successful learning across a broad range of curricular strands. They achieved, and in a few instances surpassed, the intended learning outcomes of the lessons observed.

Pupils record their learning appropriately in science manuscripts. Their knowledge in the subject is also evident through photography and designing and making projects which were attractively displayed throughout the school.

In their focus group interview, pupils stated that science lessons are fun but challenging and that they are enabled to work as scientists on a regular basis. They enjoy thinking about possibilities and learning new skills. They like working together and stated that sharing ideas with other pupils helps them to learn.

Engagement in co-curricular initiatives such as the *Green Schools Programme* supports pupils' environmental awareness and facilitates them in making meaningful connections with life-long learning. To further enrich environmental understanding and learning in Science, the school grounds should be cultivated to facilitate pupils' exploration of flora and fauna and the investigation of a variety of contrasting habitats.

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

High-quality learning experiences are provided for pupils in Science. Learning environments are relaxed and happy, and mutually respectful relationships were evident. Lessons are suitably structured and focus on discussing pupils' ideas, identifying variables, understanding fair testing and applying skills to design and make.

Science is integrated appropriately with learning in other subjects, including literacy. Pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary relevant to Science is noteworthy. They are provided with opportunities to participate in fieldtrips and learning is further enriched through their engagement with visiting science experts.

Teaching in Science is of a very high standard. Teachers employ a very wide range of active teaching approaches, including guided discovery, to develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Their planning for lessons and preparation for learning activities were of a very good quality. They use a range of scientific and digital resources to stimulate pupil engagement and to develop understanding. Lessons observed were differentiated effectively across class levels to support progressive learning for all pupils.

Very good-quality assessment practices were evident. Teachers use teacher observation, challenging teacher-designed tests, project samples and pupils' copybooks to record and assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Commendably, pupils' work, including growing bacterial cultures and creating electrical circuits, is also recorded and assessed through the use of photography.

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

The quality of whole-school planning for Science is good. As part of the school improvement process, school staff collaboratively reviewed the whole-school plan for Science. The revised plan covers all strands and strand units and outlines a cyclical two-year plan to guide teaching in the multi-grade classrooms of the school. The plan informs teachers' practice and outlines approaches to assessment of learning.

To further enhance whole-school planning, staff should undertake an environmental audit and identify areas of the locality for pupils to explore and investigate on an incremental basis. The development of an outside classroom and a school garden would enhance learning in environmental awareness and care and could facilitate opportunities for parents to share their expertise with staff and pupils.

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 NS welcomes this report and was pleased with the many affirmations therein. The report reflects the high standard of teaching and learning at our school, and the quality of the learning experiences offered to our children. The report reflects the very good work being done at St. Michael's by management, teachers, pupils and parents.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

As part of the recommendations, an audit of the school grounds has taken place. Plans to develop a school wild flower garden, vegetable patch and an outdoor classroom are now at an advanced stage. We envisage that these will facilitate pupils' exploration of flora and fauna and the investigation of a variety of contrasting habitats.

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;