



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Science Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Treasa
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Bellewstown Drogheda County Meath
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18413B
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	09-12-2022

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(s) 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.

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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement were prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement had been ratified by the board and included an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they had read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they were aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school had developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy was reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes recorded that the principal provided 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 <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy was published on its website and/or was readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.

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

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	09-12-2022
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

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Treasa is located in Bellewstown, Co. Meath and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. There were one hundred pupils distributed across four mainstream classes. The staff also included a full-time and a part-time special education teacher.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science was good with pupils demonstrating a confident understanding of the concepts taught along with a commendable awareness and appreciation of how best to care for the environment.
- The quality of pupils' learning experiences was good overall with pupils enjoying regular opportunities to develop their scientific skills through a range of investigations and make and design activities.
- The quality of teaching was good overall with all teachers working conscientiously to promote pupils' understanding and use of scientific language in both oral and written reports.
- The overall quality of assessment was good; teachers carefully monitored pupils' mastery of new learning during lessons and provided regular, constructive feedback to pupils on their work.
- The effectiveness of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) was good and it was evident that it supported teaching and learning.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide additional opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and place a whole-school emphasis on extending the use of approaches that enable pupils to engage in higher-order thinking as part of their enquiry-based learning activities in Science.
- Teachers should develop their assessment practices further on a whole-school basis to extend the range of strategies used to assess pupils' incremental development of knowledge and skills as they move from class to class; particular attention should be given to enabling pupils to reflect on and assess their own learning more regularly.
- Going forward, school leaders should use assessment data and teachers' monthly progress reports to a greater extent to monitor curriculum implementation and also to inform school self-evaluation and improvement initiatives.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The quality of pupils' learning was good overall. They demonstrated very positive learning dispositions and good understanding of the concepts and subject-specific language taught. Pupils in all classes showed age-appropriate awareness and appreciation of how best to care for the environment. It was evident from the pupils' comments that they were highly attuned to the risks that exist to our natural environments. They had examined a variety of habitats and could discuss a range of practical measures that could improve the sustainability of our environment. In contexts where learning was very good, pupils engaged in higher-order thinking frequently throughout the lesson and could generate other questions, make connections in their learning related to the line of enquiry and suggest possible applications of the new learning to everyday living. Pupils were confident in their discussions about fair-testing and spoke enthusiastically about the investigations which they had conducted during Science Week. Pupils were at ease predicting and classifying during investigations. In particular, pupils demonstrated very good application of their scientific skills during their *Designing and making* activities.

2. Supporting pupils' learning: Learner experiences and teachers' practice

The overall quality of pupils learning experiences was good. Pupils were provided with regular opportunities to have first-hand experience of many scientific phenomena. During the focus group discussion, many pupils described their valuable and enjoyable learning experiences in the school garden along with visits to local community sites to learn more about nature, living things and how materials were used. Pupils highlighted how these experiences had impacted positively on their learning as it had contributed to the development of their curiosity and interest in Science and its relevance to everyday living. School leaders had also been judicious in their selection of visiting speakers to the school to contribute to pupils' learning and it was evident that this had contributed to pupils' positivity and spirit of enquiry about Science. Pupils in many classes spoke about their enjoyment of these learning experiences, particularly their observation of birds of prey. It was noted that pupils in the infant classes had commendable opportunities to learn about scientific concepts through their engagement in integrated play experiences and exploration of a carefully prepared learning environment. Pupils reported using digital technology to research projects in Science and also to present their information and reports on occasion in some classes.

The overall quality of teaching was good with aspects of very good practice noted in some contexts. Where teaching was very good, the teachers provided pupils with a variety of opportunities and appropriate support to work collaboratively with each other to pursue a variety of teacher-led and child-led enquiries. These very good practices should now be extended on a whole-school basis to enhance pupils' incremental learning and development. All teachers worked very conscientiously to promote pupils' understanding and use of subject-specific language in Science. They used a suitable range of approaches and relevant resources effectively to support teaching and learning during the lessons observed. Teachers prepared attractive and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments which they used purposefully to facilitate pupils' learning. It was evident that there was a great sharing of teachers' individual professional knowledge and skills in Science among staff at a collective level and that the teachers collaborated effectively to inform their teaching and support pupils' learning. Teachers consistently emphasised the cross-curricular links making valuable connections with aspects of the *Primary Language Curriculum* and other curricula such as Geography, History and The Visual Arts.

The overall quality of assessment was good. Teachers carefully monitored pupils' mastery of new learning during lessons and provided regular constructive feedback to pupils on their work

to consolidate and extend their learning. In a small number of contexts where assessment practice was very good, teachers used a range of strategies including concept mapping very effectively to enable pupils to self-assess. In some contexts, pupils had copies or learning logs which were used to support pupils to reflect on their learning experiences and progress. Teachers should now develop their assessment practices further on a whole-school basis to extend the range of strategies used to assess pupils' incremental development of knowledge and skills as they move from class to class; particular attention should be given to enabling pupils to reflect on and assess their own learning more regularly.

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

The quality of school planning, including SSE, was good overall. The teachers had commenced a review of their whole-school plan for Science and had outlined the content for infant and junior classes very effectively to show the incremental development of knowledge and skills. They planned to continue with this work which would assist them in supporting and monitoring pupils' progression in learning as they moved from class to class. Going forward, school leaders should use the monthly progress reports and assessment data to a greater extent to support them in monitoring curriculum implementation in Science and also to inform their school self-evaluation and improvement initiatives.

It was evident that a culture of improvement and collaboration had been successfully fostered among staff in this school. The staff had conducted an audit of resources for Science and the school environment. Additional resources had been sourced to support teaching and learning of Science and many practical steps had been taken by the teachers to optimise the use of existing resources. These included identifying books in the class and school libraries relevant to the focus of the Science lessons and making these available to the pupils. The principal along with other school leaders who had responsibility for leading teaching and learning in Science worked collaboratively to devise valuable learning and meaningful opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum. The principal, along with in-school leaders and staff shared a vision of and commitment to developing provision for Science with due regard for national policies on promoting creativity and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

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 Scoil Naomh Treasa accepts this favourable report on the evaluation of teaching and learning in the curriculum area of Science in our school. The positive report affirms the hard work and dedication of our school community in providing high quality education for the children who attend this school.

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

As outlined in the report, a review of the whole school plan for Science is currently being conducted and should be completed this term. There are plans to further extend assessment procedures within the school in all curriculum areas which will provide greater opportunity for school leaders to monitor curriculum implementation and also to inform school self evaluation and improvement initiatives.

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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;