



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Science Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	S N San Treasa
Seoladh na scoile/School address	The Rise Mount Merrion Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18647D
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	18-11-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	26/01/2023

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 inspectors 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 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.

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 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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has 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 is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides 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 is published on its website and/or is 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	18-11-2022
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 San Treasa is an urban, co-educational primary school located in Mount Merrion, Co. Dublin. The school operates under the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. At the time of the evaluation, there were 17 mainstream teachers, one of whom was working as a Special Education Teacher (SET). There are six other SETs in the school; an additional part-time SET position remains unfilled. There were 426 pupils enrolled from junior infants to sixth class.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Pupils' learning experiences were of a very high standard; the enjoyment of Science was promoted and all pupils were motivated to learn through their engagement in stimulating activities.
- A very effective whole school approach to the use of investigations, experiments and projects was observed.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Science was very good with notable levels of scientific skills, and knowledge of environmental awareness observed during the evaluation.
- During the inspection, the quality of teaching observed was highly commendable with consistent use of active methodologies and high quality scientific language by teachers.
- The quality of assessment in Science was good; teacher observation and whole class questioning were evident in all settings observed.
- The school has made very effective use of the School-Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to promote Science and engage in programmes and awards to enhance pupils' learning.

Recommendations

- Teachers and in-school management (ISM) should identify topic specific language for each class level and ensure pupils are given opportunities to use scientific language to communicate their learning orally and in writing.
- Teachers should make consistent use of the whole-school plan for Science to guide long-term and short-term preparation to ensure classroom activities and experiments cover all stands of the curriculum.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science observed during the evaluation was very good. All pupils demonstrated high levels of engagement, motivation and enjoyment. Pupils' scientific skills were developed to a high level. In all settings, pupils demonstrated knowledge of questioning, observing, predicting, investigating and recording. Pupils were able to identify variables and explain a fair test and describe the designing and making process in detail. During interactions with the inspectors, pupils reported that projects, experiments and demonstrating to

others help them to learn effectively in Science. Pupils demonstrated high levels of knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in most areas of the curriculum. Notable levels of knowledge were evident in Materials, Environmental Awareness and Care, and Science and the Environment. Some further development is required in Energy and Forces, in particular, magnetism and electricity. While all pupils understood scientific terms some pupils found it difficult to use age appropriate scientific language to describe outcomes and communicate new learning. Teachers and the ISM should identify topic specific language for each class level and ensure all pupils are provided with opportunities to communicate new learning orally and in writing.

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

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences in Science was highly commendable. The enjoyment of Science is actively promoted through very effective use of the SSE process. Pupils in the focus group and other class settings indicated very high levels of enjoyment of Science lessons. Pupils at all levels had opportunities to work as scientists and engage in practical activities in small groups and individually. Classroom environments and corridor displays were stimulating. There was a very good whole school approach in place to teaching methodologies for Science. These included guided discovery, investigations, experiments, use of the local environment and outdoors, projects, trips and science fairs. Teachers prepared purposeful and challenging lessons during the evaluation. Very high levels of pupil engagement were observed during the evaluation. Pupils were given opportunities to pose questions, make predictions and record their learning. During the focus group, pupils outlined the positive impacts on their learning of the school garden and using the outdoor environment. They also indicated their enjoyment of books about science other than text books, explaining science to others in the science fair, doing projects, listening to professional scientists and writing about their experiments. They would like to learn more about electricity and magnetism and carry out investigations for these topics.

The overall quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was very good with exemplary practice observed in some settings. All teachers had effective short-term preparation in place to support teaching. The use of high quality scientific language by teachers was observed in all settings. Teachers provided pupils with opportunities to engage in practical activities and discuss the outcomes. Some of the activities facilitated by teachers included investigating the structure of bridges, identifying the presence of static electricity, examining the protective properties of materials, investigating how craters are formed, exploring the effect of liquids on materials, and understanding how forces act on objects. Most teachers encouraged pupils to pose questions to guide investigations. Where exemplary practice was observed pupils were provided with topic specific scientific language which enabled pupils to discuss, record and communicate their learning during activities to an exceptionally high standard. In addition, where exemplary practice was observed, teachers drew up very effective long-term plans using the whole school plan for science, the Science curriculum, textbooks, external programmes and pupil prior learning to ensure all strands and strand units were covered during the year.

The overall quality of assessment observed during the evaluation was good. All teachers assessed pupil learning through whole-class questioning and observation. Where practice was very good teachers ensured that pupils were given consistent opportunities to demonstrate their oral and written use of topic specific scientific language. Consideration should be given to the use of targeted questioning and observation to assess pupils' skills, knowledge and language use.

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

The quality of school planning, including SSE in progressing pupils' learning was highly commendable. The principal and some members of staff led the SSE process very effectively to ensure teaching in Science was engaging and challenging. As part of the SSE process the school identified clear targets and actions for all teachers to embed the use of scientific skills, participate in *Discovery Primary Science* and *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Excellence Award*, foster enquiry-based approaches, engage in teacher professional learning, and raise awareness of biodiversity. The impact of the SSE plan was evident in classroom practice in all settings. The school has also identified the need to strengthen literacy and numeracy links with the teaching of Science and the Primary Language Curriculum. Notable use of procedural writing to enhance pupils' ability to record and communicate new learning was evident in some settings. A whole school plan for Science was in place to guide teacher practice at each class level and ensure all strands and strand units are taught consistently to all pupils. All teachers should ensure this plan is used to guide long term preparation. Teachers should also identify topic specific language for each class level to develop pupils' skills in communicating new learning orally and in writing. An agreed whole-school approach to pupils' use of scientific language would be useful.

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 is extremely pleased with the recent evaluation of;

- (i) the actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying and
- (ii) the curriculum evaluation in Science

The report is extremely positive and affirms the high standards of pupils' learning experiences and their enjoyment of learning in Scoil San Treasa, Mount Merrion. We are proud of the 'highly commendable' quality of teaching within the school, noting the consistent use of active methodologies and high-quality scientific language by our teachers. The findings recognise the efficacy of the school's engagement with the SSE process and programs and awards to enhance pupils' learning in the curricular area of Science.

The Board is gratified to be in compliance in all areas of Child Protection and Anti-bullying. We aim to provide a happy, safe, and secure environment for our pupils and every member of our school community.

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 of Scoil San Treasa accepts the recommendations contained in the Report.

Teachers and in-school management (ISM) will identify topic specific language for each class level and ensure pupils are given opportunities to use scientific language to communicate their learning orally and in writing. Equally, they will endeavor to make consistent use of the whole-school plan for Science to guide long-term and short-term preparation to ensure classroom activities and experiments cover all stands of the curriculum.

As a school, we remain wholly committed to maintaining our high standards of teaching and learning in all curricular areas.

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;