

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Eoin Naofa
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Temple Street Sligo County Sligo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19974A

Date of inspection: 27-11-2019



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 inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in Geography 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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	27-11-2019
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 Eoin Naofa is an urban, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. The school has an administrative principal, ten mainstream class teachers, eight special education teachers, two of whom are deployed in speech and language classes and one in a special class for pupils with mild general learning difficulties. Currently there are 247 pupils enrolled from junior infants to sixth class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is of a very good standard; pupils display positive attitudes and are highly motivated to learn.
- Pupils are provided with very high quality learning experiences in Geography.
- The quality of teaching in Geography is very good; teachers prepare gainful learning activities for the strands of the Geography curriculum.
- The quality of assessment in Geography is good; teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills using a variety of approaches.
- Whole-school planning in the subject is of a good standard with some aspects for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The whole-school plan should be reviewed to better inform teachers' individual preparation and to reflect classroom planning in terms of subject-specific language and assessment.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is of a very good standard. Pupils display positive attitudes and are highly motivated to learn. Good levels of environmental awareness and care are promoted and pupils are enabled to develop personal and community responsibility for their environment through the school's participation in the Green Schools Programme. Some very good project work has been completed in Geography; however, pupils would benefit from an increased use of digital learning technologies (DLT) as a learning tool for this purpose.

During the focus group discussion with pupils, they reported that they enjoy their learning in Geography especially when connections are made with other subjects. During the evaluation pupils displayed very successful learning in the strands of *Human environments and Natural environments*. They demonstrated a sense of place and space and were able to talk about and describe their local

area. Senior pupils demonstrated an ability to compare and contrast their own environment with other parts of Ireland and European countries.

Pupils use a broad range of maps effectively and are developing an appropriate range of geographical skills including questioning, observing, recording and communicating. Although pupils displayed a good understanding of appropriate geographical terminology, their learning would be enhanced through the systematic development of appropriate subject-specific language. Where very good learning was observed, pupils were given opportunities to work collaboratively in groups using the new geographical language in assigned tasks. This collaborative work with its emphasis on talk and discussion and active learning should be used more regularly in some settings to enhance the learning process at each class level. In some classrooms, pupils were enabled to reflect constructively on their own learning and record key facts and skills from the lessons.

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

Overall pupils are provided with very high quality learning experiences in Geography. Play-based methodologies are used very effectively in the junior classrooms to teach Geography in a thematic manner. Geography is integrated effectively with many other curricular subjects, including literacy and numeracy. Almost all lessons evaluated were purposeful and interesting, resulting in high levels of engagement. Classroom environments, the school garden, grounds, materials and displays support and reinforce learning effectively. Pupils enjoy opportunities to engage in gardening and participate in trails. Teachers have established valuable links with the local and wider community with members of the local community making beneficial contributions to the learning experiences provided for pupils. Pupils are provided with opportunities to present their learning in Geography during assemblies.

The overall quality of teaching in Geography is very good. Teachers demonstrate very good classroom management skills. Teachers work together to devise and agree appropriate learning opportunities for pupils. They prepare gainful learning activities for each strand of the Geography curriculum. There is a very good structure and pace to lessons resulting in very good levels of active participation in lessons. Commendably, pupils own ideas are used as starting points for lessons. Textbooks are used well to scaffold learning. Lesson content is relevant to the pupils' interests, environment and life experiences and is integrated successfully with other subject areas. They provide commendable learning activities and use a range of suitable resources including maps, presentations, photographs and videos to ensure that lessons are interesting for the pupils. Teachers check for pupils' understanding of relevant strand units at regular intervals. Some teachers support the learning experiences of those pupils who experience difficulty with Geography and those of high ability through effective differentiated tasks and scaffolding.

The quality of assessment in Geography is good. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills through observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests, quizzes, journals and sample of pupils' work in copybooks. Teachers use questioning effectively to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. Commendably, some pupils were enabled to identify future learning targets. While all teachers monitor pupils' written work, the provision of worthwhile formative feedback would enhance learning in the classroom. Some very good examples of checklists to monitor the attainment of content objectives are in evidence. To build on these good approaches, it is recommended that all teachers agree a whole-school approach to the recording of pupils' knowledge and skills, to include self and peer-assessment, and use this information to plan for future differentiated learning experiences for pupils.

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

Whole-school planning is of a good standard with aspects for improvement. The principal encourages and promotes a climate of distributed leadership for Geography within the staff and fosters a commitment to inclusion. Teachers prepare long and short-term plans to support their teaching. The whole-school plan covers all three strands in a spiral developmental manner; however, individual teachers should use the whole school plan more effectively to inform individual preparation in classrooms. There is scope to develop the plan further to guide the work in classrooms regarding the incremental development of skills and assessment. An environmental audit of the locality and county has been completed; however, further guidance should be outlined to achieve a whole school approach to exploring the local environment. The plan should also outline the subject-specific language to be progressively taught at each class level.

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;