

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Geography**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Holy Family National School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	East Rock Ballyshannon County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	20150H

**Date of inspection: 14-10-2019**



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agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 2 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

## Curriculum Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	14-10-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Family National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clogher. The school caters for 144 pupils from infants to sixth class in multi-grade classes. There are five mainstream class teachers including a teaching principal and two support teachers based in the school.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good.
- Overall, pupils are provided with very good quality learning experiences in Geography; some exemplary purposeful practice which was appropriately pitched and demonstrated meaningful pupil collaboration was observed.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall; there is scope to develop planning for the language specific to the learning of Geography in a systematic manner.
- The quality of assessment is satisfactory; assessment-for-learning (AfL) strategies are not sufficiently developed in all classrooms.
- The overall quality of planning is satisfactory; the whole-school plan does not provide sufficient guidance for teachers in terms of the development of content, skills and subject literacy.
- At the time of the evaluation the board had not completed the checklist for the review of the child safeguarding statement; the school has verified that this will be completed at the next board of management meeting.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should record in short-term planning the subject-specific language to be taught at each class level in Geography.
- Teachers should develop a whole-school approach to the assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills across the strands of the Geography curriculum to include self and peer-assessment.
- A systematic plan for the development of content, skills and subject literacy, specific to the multi-grade context of the school, should be agreed and documented in the whole-school plan.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING**

The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils demonstrated enjoyment and enthusiasm during lessons overall. Senior pupils were observed to pose thoughtful and challenging questions which were actively encouraged and supported by teachers. Active learning opportunities which facilitated meaningful and purposeful pupil collaboration and discussion were also a feature of learning in the senior classrooms. This exemplary approach should be developed in a progressive and systematic manner at each class level.

During the inspection, pupils demonstrated a very good sense of place and space and could talk about and describe human and natural features of their local area successfully. Good levels of environmental awareness and care were exhibited and pupils were enabled to develop leadership skills through personal and community responsibility for their environment in school-led initiatives. Accomplished and meaningful integration of digital learning technologies (DLT) was evident where pupils engaged with collaborative group work in preparing and presenting digital projects. This meaningful use of DLT was very appropriately facilitative of established peer-assessment strategies.

During the group interview pupils reported that they enjoy their lessons and learning overall. In particular, they discussed the active participatory nature of their learning experiences including trips to areas of interest in the local environment, participation in community-centred initiatives and their active use of DLT in geographical research.

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

Overall, in most classrooms, pupils are exposed to very good quality learning experiences in Geography. Most lessons evaluated were purposeful and appropriately pitched to the varying needs of the pupils. The lessons were well structured, content was appropriately challenging and high levels of engagement were observed. This very good practice should be extended to all class settings. Classroom, school and local environments support and reinforce geographical learning very effectively. The school also facilitates guest speakers who share their knowledge with pupils about living and working in the local area. Pupils use online digital maps in support of their learning. Other very good visual resources are used by teachers to stimulate pupil response. Overall teachers' preparation of practical resources and provision of age appropriate stimuli is commendable.

The overall quality of teaching is very good in most classrooms. Where very good practice was observed teachers demonstrate very good classroom management skills and they are ambitious for pupils' learning in the main. Lesson content is relevant to the pupils' interests, environment and life experiences. This practice should be extended to all classrooms. Language relating to the learning of Geography needs to be developed and implemented in a more systematic way across the school to include the delineation of Geography specific vocabulary to be taught during lessons.

The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. In the very good practice observed, in a minority of classes, assessment for learning (AfL) strategies were embedded very successfully as part of the

classroom culture. The teachers used a very appropriate range of open-ended questions in stimulating, affirming and extending good quality pupil responses. Peer and self-assessment procedures were implemented very successfully with a clear focus on the imparting of constructive feedback for pupils. This very good practice should be explored at staff level to agree and implement a cohesive system of assessment in all classes. Teachers should develop a whole-school approach to the assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills across the strands of the Geography curriculum to include self and peer-assessment.

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

The overall quality of planning is satisfactory. While all teachers prepare adequate short and long-term plans there is at present an inconsistent standard of quality in the plans presented. The current whole-school plan for Geography has been identified as a curricular area for review. Leadership should ensure that the reviewed whole-school plan for Geography reflects the school's context and provides more appropriate and explicit guidance for teachers regarding the content, skills, local Geography and subject-specific vocabulary to be taught on a developmental and progressive basis at each class level with due regard for the multi-grade context.

## **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 Holy Family NS is very pleased with the report issued on 28/11/2019. The Board welcomes the positive findings in the report which acknowledge the good practice currently in place in the school. We are very pleased with the positive comments in the report in relation to the very good quality learning experiences provided for the pupils and the recognition of the very good quality of teaching. The pupils of Holy Family NS are very proud of the positive comments in relation to their learning and work. The staff of Holy Family NS acknowledges the evaluation process and report as a valuable experience in their on-going development as professionals.

### **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 staff recognise and accept the recommendations that were made in the Curriculum Evaluation and are happy to implement the recommendations.

Following a recent staff meeting, teachers have agreed to record in short term planning the subject specific language to be taught at each class level in Geography.

The whole school approach to assessment will be developed and our policy will be amended to include pupil-led, peer and self-assessment practices to further enhance learning opportunities in Holy Family NS. We will also review the current use of self-assessment strategies at our planning hours and strive to implement these throughout the school curriculum.

A thorough review of our school plan has commenced with focus groups having been established to work on different elements of our school plan. The development of a systematic plan for the development of content, skills and subject literacy in Geography, specific to the multi-grade context of the school will be prioritised as part of this on-going review.

The Board of Management of Holy Family N.S. has completed the 'Checklist for the Review of the Child Safeguarding Statement'. The Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy and Risk Assessment have been ratified by the Board in accordance with the mandatory checklist.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;