



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Curriculum Evaluation: Science Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Gorey Educate Together National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Kilnahue Lane Gorey Co. Wexford
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	20214H
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19-01-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	04/05/2023

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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)* 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"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>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.</li><li>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.</li></ol>

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

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# Curriculum evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	19-01-2023
<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

Gorey Educate Together National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. In addition to sixteen mainstream classes, the school has three special classes for pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The teaching staff comprised an administrative principal, sixteen mainstream class teachers, three special class teachers, and nine special education teachers. At the time of the evaluation, there were 395 pupils enrolled in the school.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good; pupils were enthusiastic learners, interested in Science and engaged very well in their learning.
- Pupils were very proud of their project work in Science, which they were enabled to present to a range of audiences.
- The school was commended on establishing effective links with the wider school community to enhance pupils' learning experiences and develop outdoor learning areas.
- The overall quality of teaching was good, with aspects of very good practice also observed.
- The school had engaged very positively in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and the impact was evident in aspects of curricular provision.

### Recommendations

- To further develop pupils' scientific skills, teachers should extend their provision for open-ended, activity-based, investigative work in Science lessons.
- Teachers should develop a whole-school approach to assessing pupils' learning in Science and use this information to ensure continuity and progression in teaching and learning across the school.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Science was good, with pupil outcomes ranging from good to very good. Pupils presented as motivated and interested learners who engaged very positively in their learning activities. They could recall and communicate key aspects of their learning, with most using appropriate scientific vocabulary confidently. Pupils in the special classes were eager to share their learning in Science. Overall, pupils demonstrated secure knowledge across the various curriculum strands; in some instances, they were less sure of how the concepts related to their local environment or their everyday lives. Pupils in the senior

classes were justifiably very proud of their project work, which they had been enabled to present to a range of audiences. Across the school, pupils demonstrated their ability to work collaboratively. Pupils were familiar with the scientific method, although their understanding of a fair test and how to apply it to their investigative work required further development in some classes.

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

Overall, good quality learning experiences were provided to the pupils in Science. Classrooms and corridors hosted a good range of displays to support the pupils' learning and celebrate their work; some displays also included an interactive element that further stimulated pupils' interest and curiosity. In most lessons, pupils were enabled to engage in hands-on learning. In the best instances, pupils were enabled to use the scientific approach and record their findings. To further support pupils' learning in Science, all classrooms should have a nature table or investigation table with which they are enabled to engage purposefully. During the focus-group interview, pupils expressed enthusiasm for learning in Science, advising that they were curious about how the world around them works. They noted that they particularly enjoyed lessons where they were engaged in practical science activities or outdoor learning, preferring this to their textbook learning. They also enjoyed using digital technologies to assist with their project work.

To enhance pupils' learning experiences in Science, the school had been involved in an extensive range of co-curricular opportunities through participation in the Mini-Scientists, Green Schools and Heritage in Schools programmes, and in the Junior Achievement Award. An after-school science club was also in place. The school was commended on enlisting the support of the wider school community in co-curricular activities, such as Edible Schools, and as guest speakers. The outdoor classroom served as a valuable resource for the pupils' learning, particularly in the strands of *Living Things*, and *Environmental Awareness and Care*.

The overall quality of teaching was good, with some aspects of very good practice also observed. Interactions between teachers and pupils were very respectful, encouraging and affirmative. Teachers shared the intended learning outcomes with pupils and most paid due regard to the explicit teaching of associated scientific vocabulary. They made relevant links between the pupils' learning in Science and other curriculum areas, for example literacy and Mathematics. In some lessons, teachers' practice overly relied on demonstration, or extended talk and discussion reduced the time for practical activities. In the best instances, teachers made very good provision for investigative work using the scientific approach, probed and extended the pupils' understanding, and enabled them to apply their learning to their everyday lives. They also skilfully adapted the content of the textbook to the local context. To facilitate the incremental development of the pupils' scientific skills, all teachers should make appropriate provision for hands-on learning and open-ended investigations.

Teachers employed an appropriate range of assessment methods to monitor pupils' learning in Science. It is timely for the school to agree a whole-school approach to assessing pupils' learning and use this information to better ensure continuity and progression in teaching and learning.

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

The overall quality of whole-school planning in Science was good. Teachers were commended on working collaboratively to plan learning experiences for each class level. There was scope to extend this collaboration to ensure progression in the learning experiences from class to class.

Staff members had been enabled to assume leadership roles in Science. The school was very well-resourced with science equipment, which was stored centrally and readily accessible to all

teachers. With the assistance of the school community, the school had developed outdoor areas as a resource for learning.

The school had engaged very positively in the SSE process and the impact was evident in aspects of curriculum provision in Science.

## 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;

# **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 wishes to acknowledge the dedication and collaboration of the many individuals and groups who drive the success of the school on an ongoing basis, including the children & their families and the entire school staff.

## **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 recommendations included in this Inspection Report will be central to our School Improvement Work over the coming year.