

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Kilskyre Mixed National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilskyre Kells County Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	01421F

Date of inspection: 08-03-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
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WHAT IS WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. The quality of pupils' learning
2. The quality of teaching
3. The quality of support for pupils' well-being
4. The quality of leadership and management
5. The quality of school self-evaluation

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.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school did not meet the requirements in relation to 4 above and therefore was not fully compliant with all the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with all the above requirements.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	08-03-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with principal and in-school management team • Meeting with representatives of the board of management • Meeting with parent representatives • Meeting with teachers • Review of relevant documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Review of pupils’ work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Kilskyre Mixed National School is a rural, mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school has four mainstream teachers and one full-time special education teacher; another special education teacher, based in another school, also teaches for a small number of hours in the school. There has been a slight decrease in enrolments in recent years; ninety-eight pupils are currently enrolled. The attendance levels of most pupils are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The quality of learning is good overall; pupils’ skills in Social, Environmental, and Scientific Education (SESE) are underdeveloped and their access to digital learning experiences is limited.
- Teaching is of good quality overall; teachers’ assessment practices in various curricular areas are not consistent from class to class and the communication phase of Irish lessons requires improvement.
- Currently, teaching hours for special educational needs (SEN) are deployed to teach Mathematics to whole-class groups; this is in contravention of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Circular 0013/2017.
- The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is effective.
- The quality of leadership and management is fair; there are a number of areas that require attention including in-school management (ISM), staff morale, staff relationships, communication practices, strategic leadership and the board’s adherence to circulars and directives.
- The overall quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is satisfactory; there is inconsistent implementation and monitoring of improvement initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board should take steps to address the issues that are impacting on staff morale; it should develop processes that promote effective communication and the rebuilding of professional relationships.
- ISM team members should reach consensus regarding their duties and they should work collaboratively to oversee areas of responsibility in leadership and management and to plan for and lead improvements in teaching and learning.

- The board should adhere to the Department's circulars with regard to the deployment of SEN teaching hours, the completion of roll books, anti-bullying procedures and the certification of school accounts.
- Teachers should provide pupils with additional opportunities to develop their skills in SESE and their communicative competencies in Irish.
- Whole-school approaches should be agreed and implemented to guide and support teachers' practices with regard to assessment and their provision of digital learning experiences across the curriculum.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of learning is good overall. During the evaluation, pupils understood and competently explained the purpose of the learning tasks that they were engaged in. Infant pupils demonstrated commendable levels of interest and motivation in their play-based learning.
- Pupils use appropriate strategies to solve mathematical problems. They ably apply their knowledge of mathematics to real-life situations. Learning outcomes, including pupils' results in standardised tests, are very good.
- Pupils have access to a broad range of differentiated reading material in English; they read with very good comprehension and fluency. There is need for pupils to participate in a wider reading experience in Irish to cater for their varying reading abilities.
- Pupils use ICT for research purposes. They report that they do not engage in digital learning experiences regularly. During the evaluation, the use of ICT as a learning tool was not observed. Teachers should develop an e-learning plan to support the provision of digital learning experiences across the curriculum.
- In most classes, pupils participate in a wide range of writing experiences. In a few classes, pupils would benefit from greater diversity in their writing tasks. A whole-school approach to writing genre would add breadth to pupils' writing experiences. Regular opportunities for pupils in the middle and senior classes to engage in the editing and redrafting of their work would assist them in developing enhanced writing skills.
- Infant pupils ably recite a variety of rhymes and jingles. While all pupils have opportunities to respond to poetry, there is scope for pupils to engage with a wider repertoire of poetry including recitation and memorisation of short poems.
- Pupils have worked collaboratively to produce interesting project work and creative constructions in SESE. They have developed a good sense of time and chronology. Pupils' understanding of key scientific concepts is underdeveloped and their participation in design and make activities requires improvement. There is need for pupils' skills such as observing, hypothesising and recording and communicating to be incrementally developed on a whole-school basis.
- Pupils' singing is very accomplished. They demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm in representing their school in performances. Their achievement of flags in respect of the Green Schools' Programme and the Health Promoting Schools' Programme is praiseworthy.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall. During the evaluation, teachers delivered effective instruction, with an appropriate emphasis on new content, which was successfully directed at eliciting pupil engagement.
- Teachers are to be commended for their creation of attractive learning environments and their use of stimulating resources during lessons. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that teaching was good in the school and most pupils agreed that their teacher explains things clearly and talks to them about how to improve their work.
- In the majority of lessons observed, teachers used an appropriate variety of teaching methodologies. In a minority of lessons observed, there was scope to provide for more purposeful, collaborative, learning experiences, including the allocation of individual pupils' roles and responsibilities during group work.
- Teachers place worthwhile emphasis on developing pupils' subject-specific language in many curricular areas. In Irish lessons, insufficient time was provided for pupils to practise the target language and to develop their communication skills. Teachers should provide pupils with additional opportunities to develop their communicative competencies in Irish.
- Support teaching is delivered in a variety of modes. Observed teacher-pupil interactions were focused and affirming. Literacy interventions have been implemented to very good effect. Currently, teaching hours for special educational needs (SEN) are deployed to teach Mathematics to whole-class groups; this is in contravention of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Circular 0013/2017 and should be ceased. There are a few omissions in documenting the *Continuum of Support* in the school; support plans should be developed for all individuals and groups of pupils that are in receipt of support.
- The overall quality of teachers' curriculum planning is effective. In a few instances, short-term planning was inadequate and long-term planning was not contextualised to the needs of learners. All teachers' planning should make explicit use of curriculum content objectives and skills to support the monitoring of curriculum implementation.
- Teachers' assessment practices are successfully developed in English and Mathematics. Assessment in other curricular areas is not consistent from class to class; opportunities exist to improve teachers' use of summative and formative strategies. A comprehensive whole-school policy on assessment should be formulated to guide and support this work.

3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- Support for pupils' well-being is effective. During the evaluation, interactions between teachers and pupils and among pupils and their peers were supportive and affirming. Teachers demonstrated very good classroom management skills and pupils' behaviour was very positive.
- In the Inspectorate questionnaires, all pupils agreed that they have learned about different kinds of bullying. The questionnaire results showed that a significant minority of pupils and a few parents did not agree that all pupils were treated fairly and respectfully in the school. The board and teachers should explore this finding further with a view to addressing any issues that emerge.
- Pupils have opportunities to engage in a commendable range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities which promote friendship, healthy eating, physical fitness and environmental awareness and care. Teachers' planning outlines their delivery of lessons with regard to the *Stay Safe* programme and Relationships and Sexuality Education. Teachers liaise effectively with external agencies to support pupils with special educational needs. There are

valuable links in place between the school and a local preschool to promote effective transitions for pupils.

- As evidenced from discussion with pupils during the evaluation, a small cohort of pupils presented as lacking in confidence in expressing their individual opinions and in articulating their learning. These pupils would benefit from participating in a programme of self-development training in this regard.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is fair; there are a number of areas that require attention. The in-school management (ISM) team consists of the principal, deputy principal and an assistant principal. Consensus regarding the duties of post-holders has not been reached in all instances. Members of the team do not meet regularly nor do they work collaboratively to oversee areas of responsibility in leadership and management. They should reach consensus regarding their duties and they should work collaboratively to plan for and lead improvements in teaching and learning.
- A deterioration in professional relationships among some members of the in-school management team and a lack of communication among teaching staff, the ISM team and the board of management is contributing to low staff morale. Staff report concern for their individual and collective well-being. The board should revisit its policy on 'Dignity in the Workplace' and seek to resolve these issues as a matter of priority, seeking external support if required.
- The board has successfully overseen the structural development of the school. It provides an attractive learning environment containing good quality educational materials and it supports teachers in undertaking educational courses. The board convenes meetings regularly to address issues that arise. In recent times, it has not been active in its engagement with strategic planning or in its oversight of curricular policy development. The board should re-engage with these processes.
- In the Inspectorate questionnaire, less than half of parents agreed that their views are sought on school matters and that the board reports annually to them on the work of the school. An action plan should be developed and implemented with regard to establishing formal and effective channels of communication within the school community.
- While financial reports of school accounts are presented at board meetings, school accounts have not been audited or certified in recent years. School accounts should be certified/audited annually.
- Closer adherence to Circulars 0028/2013 and 0033/2015 is recommended to support teachers and leaders in the implementation of requirements relating to the maintenance of roll books. The board should adhere to Circular 0045/2013 to ensure that it meets its reporting requirements at board meetings with regard to procedures on anti-bullying.
- The school provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school self-evaluation is satisfactory. Previous whole-school improvement initiatives were undertaken in accordance with the SSE guidelines. They included meaningful

consultation with key stakeholders and there is evidence to demonstrate that they impacted positively on pupils' learning.

- Teachers identified Visual Arts as the focus for improvement towards the end of the previous school year. While a report or improvement plan has not been developed, teachers are focusing on aspects identified for development in their practice. There remains a lack of clarity surrounding the roles of those leading the SSE process, with insufficient information provided to teachers to support consistent, whole-school implementation and monitoring. Meaningful reengagement with the SSE process should be progressed without delay to support leading improvements in teaching and learning.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The report contains a number of welcome recommendations in relation to the enhancement of existing school practices.

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

Immediate action has already been taken at Kilskyre Mixed National School to improve staff morale, relationships and communication. Plans are underway to develop the children's skills in SESE, their communicative competencies in Irish and how their access to digital experiences can be improved. Consensus on assessment practices will be reached to aid a future whole-school approach.

We have begun the process of devising a structure for a Kilskyre Mixed National School website to develop greater two-way communications with parents.

We have secured grant funding of €6500 to invest in much needed ICT equipment and to upgrade the existing infrastructure so that digital learning can be developed throughout all classes.

With regard to leadership and management, we have engaged with an outside consultant on best practices for management and additional workshops will be held as deemed necessary. An application with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) is also in place for resources to be made available to management on this area.

Core policy documents including anti-bullying are all being reviewed, and the certification of school accounts will be addressed.

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 of quality 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;