

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

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

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| <b>Ainm na scoile /<br/>School name</b>       | Scoil Mhichil na Buachaillí                 |
| <b>Seoladh na scoile /<br/>School address</b> | Scoil na mBráthar<br>Patrick Street<br>Trim |
| <b>Uimhir rolla /<br/>Roll number</b>         | 05630L                                      |

**Date of inspection: 06-02-2019**



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An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 inspector(s) 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 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.
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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

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| <b>Dates of inspection</b>   | 06-02-2019  |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li><li>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Meeting with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</li></ul> |

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Mhichil na Buachaillí, also known as St. Michael's NS, caters for boys from second to sixth class in the town of Trim, Co. Meath. This senior school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. Staffing comprises an administrative principal and deputy principal, twelve mainstream teachers, five support teachers and six special class teachers for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Enrolment has grown in recent years and currently stands at 321. The attendance levels of a significant number of pupils who miss more than twenty days is cause for concern.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Overall, the learning outcomes of pupils in both mainstream and special classes are very good across many areas of the curriculum.
- Support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school: the boys present as confident, highly motivated and respectful pupils.
- The overall quality of teaching is commendable, with some very good practice noted; in the main, there is an emphasis on teacher-directed, whole-class approaches.
- While there is a range of models underway to support pupils' learning including both in-class and withdrawal, nevertheless, this support is not sufficiently informed by the outcomes of assessment.
- There is commendable leadership in the school which centres on the holistic development of each pupil and the fostering of strong relations with staff members, parents and the community.
- The school has engaged successfully in the school self-evaluation process (SSE) in the past which has led to improvements in pupils' learning outcomes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should create extended opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and independently, with a particular focus on skill development and the provision of differentiated learning experiences.
- Class teachers and support teachers should ensure that all programmes of intervention for pupils with additional needs are directly informed by the analysis of comprehensive assessment data.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The pupils achieve very good learning outcomes in Mathematics, English and the Arts. The quality of pupils' English writing is very impressive in terms of range, presentation and content. The pupils demonstrate very good standards in computation, reasoning and problem solving across the mathematics curriculum. Their learning in the Arts is very good, specifically in relation to singing, playing musical instruments and creating art. The pupils demonstrate an appreciation of Irish culture and are knowledgeable about aspects of Social, Environmental and Scientific Education.
- Tá scóip chun cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fheabhsú. Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh na h-oidí níos mó béime ar an mhodh cumarsáide i múineadh an teanga agus fócas a chur ar mhúineadh agus ar ath-mhúineadh na n-eiseamláirí go córasach.  
*There is scope to improve the pupils' ability to communicate in Irish. Teachers should place more emphasis on using the communicative approach to language learning with a focus on the regular explicit teaching and revision of key language exemplars.*
- The pupils are highly motivated and engaged learners. They are very responsive during lessons and participate eagerly in their learning tasks. Individual pupils undertake high quality project work on a regular basis. To further enhance this research-based approach to learning, teachers should provide pupils with more collaborative learning opportunities, with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-related experiences.
- The pupils' learning is enhanced by the teachers' preparation of excellent displays and use of a good range of resources. Digital technologies should be a more integral part of the pupils' resources for learning during lessons to support creativity, innovation and the transfer of skills.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is commendable with very good practice observed in some settings. Teachers create an inclusive, pupil-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust. Teaching is characterised by high expectations and well-paced lessons, with good explanation and effective modelling by teachers noted across all settings. In the pupil questionnaires, the majority of pupils agree that teachers explain things clearly and talk to them about how to improve their work. Teacher-directed lessons predominate. Teachers are advised to extend the range of methodologies they use to promote more active, collaborative learning among pupils, with a particular emphasis on skills' development.

- For the most part, lessons are planned for and delivered on a whole-class basis. Such an approach does not take sufficient account of the range of learning needs within the class. Teachers should ensure that their pupils are provided with differentiated learning experiences which are based on the pupils' assessed needs. In this regard, teachers, in both mainstream and support settings, should work closely together to plan appropriate learning opportunities for pupils with additional learning needs. Such needs include, for example, pupils learning English as a second language, or pupils with very high or low achievement levels.
- Current assessment practices vary and there is scope for further development in aspects of provision. All teachers closely monitor pupils' work, provide developmental feedback and maintain records of learning, including pupil self-assessment folders. This is good practice. Nevertheless, there is scope to develop collaborative assessment approaches in the school which impact on programme planning, both in mainstream and support settings. It is recommended that all teachers maintain assessment records that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share.
- The quality of support for pupils with ASD in the settings evaluated is very good overall. This support is characterised by effective communications, carefully-planned learning activities and clear progression. The support provided by the special needs assistants is praiseworthy. The school has established strong relations within the community to support the pupils' education. The pupils are enabled to participate in a range of learning experiences in the local area which significantly enriches their wellbeing and practical life skills.
- There is scope to bring greater cohesion and effectiveness to the support provided to pupils with additional needs. The school is very responsive to the needs of pupils and has developed a range of support models. The roles of teachers in the team-teaching model of support require greater clarity in order to optimise learning outcomes. The school has begun using the Continuum of Support. This is good practice. All targets and support plans for pupils with additional needs should be directly informed by the analysis of comprehensive assessment data. All support planning should be undertaken on a weekly basis to ensure steady and measurable progression in learning.

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

- Support for pupils' wellbeing is a significant strength of the school. This welcoming school promotes an orderly, calm and supportive environment where pupils grow in confidence as learners. All staff members work cohesively to support pupils' wellbeing, to affirm their efforts and celebrate their achievements through school assemblies, the choir, themed weeks and sporting activities. The pupils' voice is promoted through their participation in school committees, including a students' council. The number of pupils absent for more than twenty days in recent years is cause for concern. The school should review its attendance-promotion strategies and ensure that more robust, ongoing approaches are implemented and monitored.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- There is commendable school leadership and management at all levels. Board members work collaboratively and in a supportive manner to ensure that the school is a safe and effective learning environment. The board keeps parents well informed on school developments. It should explore ways to incorporate the views of parents in policy formation and SSE as far as is practicable. The board should review its enrolment policy to better reflect the school's inclusion practices.
- The principal and deputy principal, working closely together, foster strong relationships and communicate a shared vision centred on inclusion and the holistic development of each pupil. The school is well run and is supported by appropriate procedures, plans and policies. The in-school leadership team members are aware of the school's changing needs and are responsive to them. They carry out their roles effectively. They are well placed to lead out in developing whole-school collaborative practices in areas such as assessment.
- School leadership values and supports partnership with parents as a means of enhancing pupils' learning and well-being. The officers of the parent-teacher association expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school's openness and the welcome given to parents. The association provides very good support to the school. Effective and regular communications with parents are established. According to the parent questionnaires, the majority of parents agree that there is a good atmosphere, and that the school is welcoming and well run.
- The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, pupils and the teacher education institute.

#### **5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The quality of SSE is good. The school has used the process of SSE for the purpose of school improvement and this has had an impact on learning. It has yet to determine the focus of SSE for this current cycle of strategic planning. The school is advised to use *Looking At Our School 2016*, the Inspectorate publication, to support reflection in this area.

## 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 <b>very good</b> 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;   |