

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

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

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Our Lady Of Mercy Junior Primary School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Jim Brunnock Road Kells Co. Meath
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	12068D

**Date of inspection: 07-11-2019**



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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 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, Well-being).
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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	07-11-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and in-school management (ISM) team</li><li>• Meetings with teachers</li><li>• Meeting with parent and board of management (BOM) representatives</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>• Post-Inspection feedback meeting with the staff, the parent and board of management representatives</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Our Lady of Mercy Junior Primary School transitioned very recently in September 2019 to a co-educational junior school catering for pupils from infants to second class. Extensive preparation has been undertaken to facilitate this significant development and to ensure a smooth transition for the range of stakeholders. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath and currently has 323 pupils who are distributed across fourteen mainstream classes. Vigilant monitoring of pupil attendance occurs to optimise pupil attendance. The school is cognisant of the diversity of social, economic and cultural backgrounds within its local community and avails of government funding towards the provision of mid-morning snacks for pupils.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning is very good although pupils' independent use of basic verbs and questions in Irish are underdeveloped in many instances.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall with excellent individual and whole-school practices in literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good.
- The quality of assessment practices is very good overall; pupil self-assessment has yet to be developed on a whole-school basis.
- Leadership and management is very good with leaders demonstrating commendable capacity to manage change processes in a collaborative and child-centred manner.
- School self-evaluation is of a very high quality.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ba chóir do fhoireann na scoile, scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí i nGaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh ar bhonn scoile-uile agus deiseanna breise a thabhairt dóibh Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil agus foirmiúil a úsáid i gcomhthéascanna éagsúla go neamhspleách, le n-aird áirithe tugtha do lámhseáil na mbriathre. *The school staff should further develop the pupils' speaking skills in Irish on a whole-school basis and give them additional opportunities to independently use informal and formal Irish in various contexts, with particular attention to be given to the mastery of key verbs.*
- A whole-school emphasis should be placed on the development of practices that enable pupils to engage in regular self-assessment activities that allow them to reflect on and analyse learning strategies and achievements.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils demonstrate positive dispositions towards their learning and in particular towards mathematics, and towards listening to and reading stories. During the inspection, pupils could discuss their active role in a wide range of appropriate learning experiences.
- Pupils have ample opportunities to learn through enriching play experiences and guided-discovery activities. Regular involvement in collaborative learning contributes to the very high quality of active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication skills demonstrated by pupils.
- Pupils' social skills development and awareness of their emotions are significant strengths. They have ample opportunity to make decisions and take responsibility for tasks. Pupils show very good knowledge and understanding of the Irish sign-language system *Lámh* and the significance of the various green flags awarded to the school.
- Pupils' learning achievements in English reading and in mathematics are particularly praiseworthy. Pupils show good understanding of core vocabulary in Irish although their independent use of basic verbs and questions remains underdeveloped in a significant number of instances. Pupils show a very good understanding of their local history and geography and a strong sense of belonging to their school community.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to explore and express their creativity; a whole-school emphasis on open-ended drawing is highly commended. Pupils' fine and gross motor skills are very well developed.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very good with some excellent individual and collective practice evident. Very good classroom management and notably high levels of organisation and preparation contribute to the very positive learning environments. Teachers provide detailed planning for both mainstream and special education contexts. The Continuum of Support is very well embedded in practice. Teachers prepare an extensive range of resources to facilitate enriching, multi-sensory learning experiences for pupils. There remains scope to extend the use of digital resources.
- A suitable range of whole-school approaches has been adopted to ensure the systematic and incremental development of key literacy and numeracy concepts and skills, including a number of evidence-based, in-class support interventions. Staff avails of regular professional development opportunities and this contributes to the very high quality of provision across a number of curricular areas, including the successful implementation of the Ready, Set, Go Maths programme. The very close collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers (SETs) ensures very high levels of responsiveness to pupils' evolving needs. Excellent practice was noted where teachers' provision for pupils' very complex needs were particularly noteworthy.
- Teacher-pupil interactions are characterised by very skilful questioning, prompting and the provision of timely, formative feedback to pupils. Teachers differentiate provision very effectively to meet pupils' varying needs. The use of individualised success criteria to progress pupils' writing, editing and self-assessment skills noted in a small number of mainstream contexts is highly commended and this excellent practice should now be extended on a whole-school basis. *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is very well established.

Pupils are enabled to plan for their individual and collaborative play activities in infant classes. While some opportunities are provided for pupils to review their play, there remains scope to consolidate and extend these practices.

- The quality of assessment is very good overall. Teachers use a variety of approaches to gather and use information regarding pupils' learning. Diagnostic assessment is used judiciously to support pupils with SEN and in-class support initiatives are evidence-based. While some opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on their learning, there remains scope to enhance the development of pupils' self-assessment skills. Greater use of photographic evidence and assessment logs along with the promotion of visuals to scaffold the various self-assessment strategies would enhance pupils' capacity to engage in higher-order thinking.
- The data from the parent questionnaires distributed during the evaluation indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. An affirming, child-centred culture is characterised by respectful, playful interactions between pupils and teachers and among pupils. Staff give detailed attention to pupils' care and emotional well-being; they are highly attuned to pupils' needs and very attentive to the inclusion of pupils with varying needs. Developing pupils' resilience is a key characteristic of provision.
- Pupils' well-being is enhanced by their engagement in a range of beneficial programmes including the Active Schools initiative and the Health Promoting Schools' project. The involvement of pupils in the student council is highly commended.

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

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The data from the parent questionnaires conducted during the evaluation indicate that almost all parents are very satisfied that the school is well-run and feel welcome in the school.
- The board of management demonstrates appropriate understanding of its role and formally reflects on aspects of its practice. An example of the board's effective project management is the recent addition of a sports field. School management is advised to review the arrangements for recreational breaks to ensure that the length of the school day is in accordance with the DES circular 11/95, Time in School.
- The principal is very effective in her management of this school and in her leadership of learning. She affords a very high priority to the well-being of pupils and staff and the involvement of parents. The principal has been successful in facilitating the development of a very effective model of distributed leadership in the school.
- The principal is ably supported by the deputy principal, and together with the ISM team and staff manage change processes in a professional and sensitive manner. A positive sense of team-work prevails. Post-holders demonstrate very good capacity to lead and monitor improvement initiatives.
- The staff of 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 standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

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

- The quality of SSE is very good. School leaders have been successful in nurturing a culture of improvement, collaboration and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment. Many whole-school improvement initiatives have been successfully established that have impacted positively on the quality of teaching approaches and learning.
- The cyclical process of SSE has been well-established and priority areas for development have been identified including provision for Music and the promotion of digital teaching and learning. Extending the involvement of parents and pupils in the design and review of future SSE process is recommended.

# **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 welcomes the very positive tone of this report and the affirmation of the great work being carried out in the school by the staff, pupils and parents. This work is supported by the Board and the Parents' Association. It also welcomes the very positive feedback from the parents during the course of the evaluation. The Board is pleased that the report identifies and acknowledges the very high standards of learning, teaching and pupil achievement which is clearly evident in the school. It also welcomes the recognition of the inclusive and positive learning atmosphere of the school. The Board of Management believes that the positive findings are a reassuring endorsement of the dedication, competency and professionalism of the entire staff of the school.

**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 acknowledges the recommendations of the inspectors. The school appreciates the opportunity to use the recommendations in its self-evaluation and self-improvement processes.



## 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
<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;