

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Columba's N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Tullow Co Carlow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	13607M

Date of inspection: 05-02-2019



**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 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 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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	05-02-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with principal and in-school leadership 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 • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Columba's NS is a co-educational school in Tullow, Co Carlow. The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel and Ossory. There are currently 62 pupils enrolled at the school and their attendance rates are very good. The school has three mainstream teachers and one shared support teacher. There has been considerable change in teaching staff over the past number of years. At the time of the evaluation, the roles of principal and deputy principal were in an acting capacity.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning is acceptable, some pupils demonstrate a negative attitude towards their learning.
- The quality of teaching is good, teachers are clear communicators and use a wide range of teaching methodologies, there is scope to develop team-work among staff.
- Action is required to improve the quality of support for pupils' wellbeing, significant challenges in the management of pupils are impacting on the atmosphere and culture of the school.
- Action is required to improve the quality of leadership and management, challenges in developing an integrated school community are impacting on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good and agreed actions are having an impact on the presentation of pupils' work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management, in consultation with parents, pupils and teachers should identify, agree, implement and monitor a code of behaviour which would reward positive behaviour and identify clear expectations for behaviour and engagement in lessons, during recreation and during arrival and dismissal time; a system for dealing with misbehaviour and poor engagement should also be devised and implemented.
- A formal system should be developed to allow teachers to share innovative teaching practices and to plan collaboratively, this should be used to develop a consistent whole-school approach for models of in-class support and mainstream teaching.
- The board should actively seek parental involvement from each family and structures should be put in place to ensure meaningful, participative engagement by parents in policy formation, development, implementation and review.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is acceptable.
- Some pupils, most notably in the early years, display enjoyment and interest in their learning. In other classes, pupils demonstrate a negative attitude towards their learning and during classroom observations pupils were frequently off-task and were reluctant to contribute to class discussions. Results from the pupil questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation indicate that a significant minority do not enjoy their lessons and learning. In order to optimise pupils' engagement in lessons the learning intention, including expectations for behaviour, should be shared with pupils and revisited at the end of the lesson in order to track pupils' learning and behaviour.
- In lessons observed most pupils achieved the stated learning objective for the lesson. For the most part, pupils have good phonics skills, read fluently and demonstrate good comprehension of the text. During classroom interactions, many pupils had difficulty in applying their learning to other contexts and in recalling previous learning. For some pupils, attainment in Mathematics and English is decreasing. Pupils should be given frequent opportunities to synthesise and apply their understandings to new contexts.
- Pupils are given a wide range of interesting learning experiences and pupils were observed working in groups and independently during the evaluation. *Aistear* is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' oral language at the infant level. Recent introduction of tin whistle lessons, a wide array of sporting experiences and regular library visits are enhancing pupils' learning experiences.

1. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers are interested and work hard to motivate the pupils in their classes. Positive, respectful and playful interactions were observed between teachers and pupils in all settings. Teachers are clear communicators and use a wide range of teaching methodologies. Lessons observed were well structured. Where very effective practice was observed pupils' prior learning was accessed and built upon.
- The quality of management of pupils is significantly impacting on pupils' learning. Where pupils' behaviour was off-task, the pace of lessons was slower and pupils were unsure of how to complete assigned activities. Teachers should model the expected task at the outset of lessons.
- Team-teaching approaches are developing at the school. In order to further embed these good practices, teachers should collaboratively plan lessons. Consideration should be given to organising team-teaching interventions into time-bound units, in order to allow for ongoing monitoring of their impact on pupil attainment, particularly for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Very good work has been done in some settings and the use of checklists, annotated teacher-designed tests and revision copybooks are particularly noteworthy.

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

- Action is required to improve the quality of support for pupils' wellbeing. Teachers in some settings are using programmes to develop pupils' resilience and positive attitudes to school. The recent development of a Green Schools' committee and an Active School committee is praiseworthy. The principal works to identify areas of interest for pupils in order to increase

their enjoyment of school. It is noteworthy that teachers have accessed support from outside agencies in order to manage pupils' behaviour more effectively.

- Despite these endeavours, throughout the evaluation a significant minority of pupils' demonstrated a negative attitude towards school. Results from the pupil questionnaires show that most pupils do not agree with the statement that all the pupils in my class are treated fairly and respectfully. This is impacting negatively on pupils' engagement and enjoyment of their lessons and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The school has a code of behaviour but it is general in nature and requires more detail in order to provide practical guidance to teachers, pupils and parents. This code should reward positive behaviour and identify clear expectations for behaviour and engagement in lessons, during recreation and during arrival and dismissal time, as well as a system of dealing with misbehaviour and poor engagement. All parents and pupils should become aware of the code and understand its contents. The code should be visible in classrooms and around the school and yard. The role of external agencies should be exploited in the creation and monitoring of the code. The Board, in consultation with parents, pupils and teachers should identify, agree, implement and monitor this amended code of behaviour.
- There are a significant number of pupils with additional needs and English as an additional language (EAL) and many of these pupils cannot engage effectively in their lessons as the teaching is not sufficiently differentiated to accommodate their needs. It is advised that teachers avail of support from relevant agencies in the creation of student support files, in the writing of meaningful targets that address pupils' current need and in using diagnostic testing.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Action is required to improve the quality of leadership and management. The board has regular meetings and fulfils its regulatory requirements. The chairperson has a long standing interest and commitment to the school. The acting principal is dedicated to the school and her openness and willingness to work with others in order to bring about improvement in the school is highly praised. The newly-appointed acting deputy principal attends to her current duties in a highly professional manner. Curricular leadership is not currently prioritised and staff morale is low. There is a need for a shared vision in order to improve school stability and improve management of pupils. It is recommended that a formal system be developed to allow teachers to share innovative teaching practices and plan collaboratively in order to develop a whole-school approach to management of pupils, in-class models of support and consistent approaches to mainstream class teaching
- The parents association actively supports the school through its fundraising efforts. It is praiseworthy that there is good communication between the parents association and the school and results from parental questionnaires indicate that almost all parents are happy with the school.
- The school enrolls a significant minority of pupils where English is not their first language and from a variety of countries and cultures. It adopts a range of suitable strategies to communicate with these parents including the translation of notes and newsletters. During the evaluation it was reported that there are significant challenges in developing an integrated school community. In order to develop a more collaborative school environment the board should actively seek parental involvement from each family. Two-way communication between parents and school should be promoted. The Board is advised to issue an agreed report to stakeholders following each board meeting and put structures in

place to ensure meaningful, participative engagement by parents in the formation, implementation and review of policies.

- The management of pupils, retention of teachers and maintenance of learning standards is presenting the school with significant challenges. To this end the board, with the support of the patron, should prioritise the implementation of the recommendations of this report in order to bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and learning.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of SSE is very good. An area of focus has been identified and teachers are consistently teaching and monitoring pupils' presentation skills. There has been considerable improvement in the quality of pupils' handwriting during this academic year and the addition of agreed class-based targets and the communication of high expectations to pupils is greatly praised. The school should use its successful experience of SSE to address school priorities.

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 very good 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;

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 accepts the findings and recommendations of the WSE report

The BOM is pleased that the report acknowledged

- The quality of teaching is good
- The quality of School Self-Evaluation is very good
- The quality of pupil' learning is acceptable.

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 accepts the recommendations made in the WSE-MLL report and has begun to implement a plan of action.

- We have begun the process of reviewing our Code of Behaviour. Questionnaire have been completed by Parents and Pupils and meetings will be held with stakeholders to discuss outcomes.
- We have begun to use Croke Park house to facilitate more collaboration with staff regarding teaching practices, in class planning and curricular planning.
- Ways to improve parental involvement in the school are being investigated i.e. volunteering for literacy activities, events, trips, work teams and other school activities.