

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	Breaffy National School
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Breaffy Castlebar County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	13781F

Date of inspection: 18-01-2019



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agus Scileanna
Department of
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WHAT IS WHOLE- EVALUATION?

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school. In addition to evaluating leadership and management, school planning and self-evaluation, and support for pupils, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and one other subject.

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.

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 leadership and management
2. The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. The quality of support for pupils

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.

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

Date of inspection	18-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal, deputy principal and assistant principals• Review of relevant documents• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Feedback to principal and teaching staff• Feedback to board of management and parent representative

CONTEXT

Breaiffy National School, which is under the patronage of the Archbishop of Tuam, is located five kilometres from Castlebar. This is a co-educational school with classes from junior infants to sixth class. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), a programme of the Department of Education and Skills to alleviate educational disadvantage. At the time of the evaluation, there were 410 pupils enrolled. In addition to the administrative principal, there were sixteen mainstream class teachers and eight special education teachers (SETs) on the staff.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of school leadership and management was fair; while the work of the board was good, the quality of teamwork and distributed leadership within the school was fair.
- The leadership of teaching and learning was weak.
- The overall quality of school planning and school self-evaluation was fair.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement was good; the absence of agreed whole-school approaches was impacting negatively on continuity and progression in pupils' learning in some areas.
- The overall quality of support for pupils was good; the school provides a wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management and principal should, in close consultation with the teaching staff, develop, implement and monitor the operation of a whole-school policy regarding dignity in the workplace.
- The board of management and principal should ensure that the operation of in-school management is in accordance with Department of Education and Skills Circular 70/2018.
- The principal should, with the support and monitoring of the board of management, and in close consultation with teachers, improve the current arrangements for in-school communication, including staff meetings.
- The principal and in-school management should provide more effective leadership of teaching and learning in order to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning; this will involve the agreement, implementation and monitoring of whole-school approaches to planning, teaching and assessment in mainstream and support settings.

- The principal should gather monthly records of work completed in all learning settings in accordance with Rule 126 of the *Rules for National Schools*, and use these records to monitor progress in teaching and learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of school leadership and management was fair.
- The work of the board of management was good. Meetings with the board and a review of the minutes of board meetings indicated that much work was being done with a view to ensuring the development and effective operation of the school.
- The work of the principal and in-school management was fair. The principal has led the development of the school's building and grounds and ensured that the school is extremely well resourced with regard to equipment and materials for teaching, including information and communications technology (ICT). The high levels of satisfaction expressed by pupils and their parents in questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation also reflect positively on the work of the principal and in-school management.
- There is a need, however, to foster a more positive working climate in the school, especially at the levels of senior and middle management. The following recommendations should be implemented by the principal with the support and monitoring of the board of management and in close consultation with the teaching staff. A whole-school policy regarding dignity in the workplace should be developed, implemented and reviewed regularly. Arrangements for in-school communication, including staff meetings, should be improved. An open and transparent policy for allocating teachers to classes and other teaching roles should be developed and implemented.
- The quality of teamwork and distributed leadership in the school was fair. Areas of responsibility have been assigned to the deputy principal and each of the assistant principals. It was reported that meetings of the in-school management take place regularly. However, leadership of teaching and learning was weak. The principal, with the support and monitoring of the board of management, should empower teachers with posts of responsibility to share responsibility for leading school development, in accordance with Department of Education and Skills Circular 70/2018. The principal should provide for more effective leadership of teaching and learning. This will involve the agreement, implementation and monitoring of whole-school approaches to planning, teaching and assessment in mainstream and support settings.
- 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, and the teacher-education institution.
- The school has effective systems for keeping parents informed about the work of the school. The parents' association has an annual programme of activities that includes information seminars, fundraising and occasions to mark important school events. In questionnaires that

were administered to parents as part of this evaluation, almost all of the respondents were in agreement with positive statements about the school. There was very little evidence, however, of parents being involved in school planning and self-evaluation processes. It is recommended that the school set clear targets for parental involvement as part of the DEIS planning process and implement and monitor actions to achieve these targets.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The overall quality of school planning and self-evaluation was fair. The targets that are set out in the current DEIS plan are not sufficiently specific to provide a focus for implementation and review. The principal and deputy principal should lead the school in a more meaningful engagement with the DEIS planning process.
- The quality of the whole-school curriculum plans reviewed during the inspection was fair and they did not generally provide useful guidance for teaching and learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

The quality of pupils' learning was good overall, although there was significant variation in this regard between curricular areas. The overall quality of teachers' individual practice was good, and ranged from excellent in some instances to fair in others. There was very limited evidence of agreed whole-school approaches to teaching and learning and this was impacting negatively on continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they moved up through the school.

- The overall quality of assessment was fair. At classroom level teachers should, in advance of each unit of work, identify clearly the learner outcome(s) to be achieved and a suitable way of assessing and recording these outcomes. Monthly progress records were not being maintained centrally in the school by the principal as required by Rule 126 of *Rules for National Schools*. The principal should ensure that the school is in full compliance with Rule 126.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English was good. There was evidence of effective development of phonological awareness, word recognition and reading vocabulary. Class libraries were well stocked and many classrooms had good displays to support and encourage vocabulary development. Pupils had been given the experience of writing in a range of genres. The school should implement a consistent whole-school approach to the development of writing, to include a school-wide approach to the development of the pupils' handwriting and the provision of regular opportunities for free writing. The school should also implement a shared approach to oral-language development, to include the identification and teaching of key vocabulary in all lessons across the curriculum.
- Bhí cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil. Bhí céimeanna cuí á leanúint ar an iomlán i bhforbairt na scríbhneoireachta agus na léitheoireachta. I bhforbairt na teanga ó bhéal, bhí an spriocfhoclóir á chur os comhair na ndaltaí go héifeachtach agus raon d'imeachtaí in úsáid chun é a dhaingniú, lena n-áiríodh sluafhreagairt, drámaí, rainn agus amhráin. Ba léir, áfach, nach raibh taithe ag na daltaí ar úsáid neamhspleách na teanga le haghaidh cumarsáide agus go raibh deacrachtaí ar leith acu le húsáid na mbriathra agus struchtúr abairte. Ba chóir gá a chruthú le húsáid neamhspleách na teanga le haghaidh cumarsáide i ngach ceacht Gaeilge. Ba chóir do gach múinteoir na daltaí a thumadh sa sprioctheanga le linn an cheachta Ghaeilge.

- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish was satisfactory. Appropriate steps were being taken overall in the development of writing and reading. With regard to oral language, target vocabulary was presented effectively to the pupils and a range of activities was used to reinforce it, including choral repetition, drama, verses and songs. It was clear, however, that pupils had little experience of using the language independently for communicative purposes and that they had particular difficulties with verbs and sentence structure. Teachers should create a need for pupils to use Irish independently for communicative purposes in every Irish lesson. All teachers should immerse the pupils in the target language for the duration of the Irish lesson.*
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics was very good. Teaching approaches and pupil achievement were very good or good in almost all of the lessons observed. Generally, there was effective use of whole-class, group and individual activities and very good use of mathematical equipment and materials. While pupils' use of mathematical language was very good in some settings, the consistent implementation of a whole-school approach to this area would benefit all pupils.
- Drama was used effectively to consolidate and deepen learning in other subjects. However, provision in Drama, as in the other subjects evaluated, could be improved by closer monitoring and co-ordination of curriculum implementation throughout the school.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The overall quality of support for pupils was good. In mainstream and support settings, engagement in learning and enjoyment and motivation were very good or good in almost all of the lessons observed. Interactions between teachers and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, provided evidence of mutual respect, affirmation and trust. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.
- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs was good overall. Standardised assessment tests were collated and analysed at whole-school level. There was also whole-school planning for the allocation of school support, which included a blend of in-class support and withdrawal of pupils. However, the quality of planning, teaching and assessment varied significantly from one support setting to another, ranging from excellent to fair. Senior management should facilitate the sharing of good practice among SETs and ensure that all pupils in receipt of support benefit from the high-quality planning, teaching and assessment that was observed in some instances during this evaluation.
- In questionnaires administered to pupils, almost all agreed with many positive statements about their experience of school. However, fewer than half of the pupils surveyed agreed that they had "a say in how things are done in the school". During the evaluation, there was very limited evidence of opportunities for pupils to develop competences required for active citizenship through working on committees that impact on school life. Action is required to improve the quality of pupil involvement and leadership in the school.

Appendix

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.

We acknowledge the positives in the stakeholder surveys and the excellent classroom teaching. We note the positive findings from parents regarding teaching and learning and the recognition in the report of the strong commitment from staff in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

We recognise the need for continuous improvement and, in particular, the need to focus on whole-school improvement initiatives to optimise and leverage the value of teamwork and distributed leadership in 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.

We have commenced the development of a Whole-school Improvement Programme for 2019 to include the WSE report recommendations.

We have reviewed and are implementing a whole-school policy for dignity in the workplace. We will prioritise specific improvement actions to be implemented in the current school year.

We will work with the Principal and ISM staff to review the ISM roles and responsibilities with additional emphasis on the leadership roles in the area of curricular responsibilities. We will, in line with the recommendations, encourage and empower the principal and staff in undertaking new teamwork and leadership initiatives.

We recognise the value of excellence in in-school communications in achieving a whole-school approach to teaching and learning and general staff welfare. We will work on formalising in-school communications and leveraging digital technology, to improve efficiency and access through the extended use of Aladdin and mobile apps.

It is agreed through consultation that the monthly records of work are now collected on a shared platform in soft copy and available to all staff for review in addition to the Principal. This will enhance and inform whole-school progression, planning and regular review by all staff in all learning settings and facilitate regular monitoring by the Principal.

We have commenced engagement with PDST and SESS to improve our DEIS and SEN planning in line with the recommendations.

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	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;