Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Ballylanders N S</th>
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<td>School address</td>
<td>Ballylanders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co Limerick</td>
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<td>Roll number</td>
<td>14305B</td>
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Date of inspection: 11-04-2019
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 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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
<th>11-04-2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</td>
<td>Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</td>
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<td>Meeting with representatives of the board of management</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Meeting with parent representatives</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with teachers</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballylanders National School in County Limerick is a rural, co-educational school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. In recent years, school enrolment has increased steadily. Currently there are 140 pupils enrolled; their school attendance rates are very good. There are five mainstream class teachers and three teachers support pupils with special educational needs; one of these teachers is shared with another school in the locality.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good; however, their competencies in Irish could be improved.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good; in some settings, a broader range of teaching approaches is required.
- Overall, pupils with special educational needs receive very good support.
- Support for pupils’ well-being is of a very high standard.
- The quality of school leadership and management is highly commendable.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Moltar béim sa bhreis a chur ar Ghaeilge labhartha agus ar Ghaeilge scríofa chun gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí a fheabhsú. It is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on spoken Irish and written Irish to improve the pupils’ attainment.
- The school needs to ensure that an extended range of teaching approaches is employed across the curriculum; pupils should have more frequent opportunities to collaborate and the quality of class discussions should be further improved.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

- The quality of pupils’ learning is very good.
- In English, the pupils write very well in a range of genres and their handwriting is very good overall. In Mathematics, they demonstrate good skills including the ability to estimate and reason. In questionnaires, all parents agree that that the school is helping their child to make progress in Mathematics.
• Sa Ghaeilge, tá caighdeán maith tuisceana ag na daltaí agus léann siad le fuaimniú agus liofacht chuí. I roint ranganna, is féidir le ceisteanna a chur aghas a fhreagairt; ach ar an iomlán, léirionn roinnt mhaith diobh easpa muinine agus iad ag labhairt. Den chuid is mó, scríobhann siad cleachtaí ó théacsleabhair agus leabhair oibre. *In Irish, the pupils have a good level of understanding and they read with appropriate pronunciation and fluency. In some classes, they are able to pose and answer questions; however overall, many of them lack confidence when speaking. For the most part, they engage in writing exercises from textbooks and workbooks.*

• In the Arts, the pupils achieve very good outcomes, particularly in Music. They learn to play stringed instruments and participate in a school orchestra. They also have some knowledge of music literacy. In Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), the pupils engage in project work, field trips and investigations. They develop skills and are physically active through a good range of work in Physical Education (PE). They benefit from an appropriate programme of work in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

• The quality of teaching is very good.

• The teachers develop supportive learning environments and they set out comprehensive written plans. Effective classroom management strategies are employed, ensuring that pupils’ attention is garnered and sustained throughout lessons. Pupils’ progress is assessed regularly and assessment outcomes are used in an effective manner to inform differentiated teaching.

• Play-based teaching approaches are used in the junior settings, enabling younger pupils to develop and use their language skills and to explore concepts actively. Across the school, some very good active learning was observed during the inspection, particularly in Mathematics and Science. In some instances, the pupils would benefit from a greater variety of teaching approaches, through the use of differentiated texts and information and communications technology across the curriculum. It would be worthwhile also to enable them to work in small groups and to have more opportunities to report to their peers. In some settings, pupils’ contributions during class discussions are not clearly audible and the conversational element of class discussions is limited.

• Reading skills are very well taught; all pupils are enabled to read at an appropriate level and comprehension strategies are addressed systematically. Lessons in Mathematics feature thorough teacher input, and clear explanations and questioning.

• Sa Ghaeilge, ullmhaíonn na múinteoirí ceachtanna taitneamhacha agus spreagúla. moltar béim sa bhreis a chur ar Ghaeilge labhartha agus ar Ghaeilge scriofa chun gnóthacht aíl na ndaltaí a fheabhsú. Tá gá le haistriúcháin go Béarla a sheachaint agus tá gá le húsáid a bhaint as an gcuir chuige cumarsáideach ar bhonn níos rialta i ngach rang. Ba chóir tuilleadh deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí breis rannta agus amhrán a fhoghlaim agus a aithris go minic ó chuidmue. b’fhiú freisin deiseanna a fheabhsú nó dao fhaid iad a bheit ag labhairt i bpéirí agus i ngnúpaí beaga. B’fhiú deiseanna a thabhairt dóibh tabhairt faoi saor-scribhneoireacht agus scribhneoireacht as a stuaímn féin. *In Irish, the teachers prepare enjoyable and stimulating lessons. It is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on spoken Irish and written Irish to improve the pupils’ competencies. There is a need to avoid translation to English and there is a need to use the communicative approach more consistently in every class. Pupils should be given additional opportunities to learn more rhymes and songs and to recite them frequently from memory. They should also be given regular opportunities to speak in pairs and small groups. It would be worthwhile to provide them with opportunities to engage in free writing and independent writing.*

• The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. The teachers engage in relevant continuous professional development and they liaise with
professional services to support pupils. Early intervention is prioritised and support is provided through team teaching and on a one-to-one basis. The SEN team leads some in-class initiatives. All of the teachers collaborate well in planning, implementing and monitoring these initiatives. Pupils’ individual programmes of work include clear targets and are generally progressive. The pace and content of some of these programmes need to be reviewed to ensure that the pupils remain positive and motivated in their learning.

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

- The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is highly commendable. The teaching staff and ancillary staff work together to promote and sustain a very positive school atmosphere. The school prioritises pupils’ holistic development and teachers proactively address the pupils’ emotional and social needs. The pupils benefit from the school’s sensory room, and they are provided with a daily lunch through DEIS.

- A strong sense of community is generated through whole-school events and celebrations. The school has established links with the local pre-school and post-primary school. The senior pupils participate in a programme which promotes positive transitions to post-primary school. In pupil questionnaires, almost all pupils indicated that they like school, feel safe in the classroom and get on well with other children in the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good.

- The board of management functions very effectively. It is proactive in developing and reviewing school policies and it plans strategically for the school accommodation which is of high quality. The board supports staff to engage in continuous professional development and it ensures that the school is well resourced. The board is encouraged to continue to communicate with the school community regarding the work of the school, through the school self-evaluation and DEIS planning processes.

- The principal fulfils her role in an exemplary manner. She successfully nurtures positive relations between school personnel and pupils, and with parents and the community. She is highly organised and sets clear priorities for the school’s development. She displays strong commitment to promoting high standards in teaching and learning across the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. The deputy principal and special-duties post holder provide very good support to the principal by undertaking a range of tasks conscientiously.

- The school 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 school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good. The school has used the DEIS planning process to develop and implement various initiatives in literacy and in numeracy. It is currently taking steps to implement a digital learning plan to support the use of digital technology for teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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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 of Ballylanders N.S. welcomes this WSE-MLL Report and is encouraged by the affirmation it gives to our school community. It affirms the very good quality of teaching and learning, pupil achievement, pupil support and well-being, parental support, leadership and management and self-evaluation in the school. We are also pleased by the very positive response of both parents and pupils to the inspectorate questionnaires. The report acknowledges the hard work, commitment and dedication of all those involved in our school community.

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 accept the recommendations of the report and are committed to implementing them. School staff has collaboratively reviewed each recommendation. We will place additional emphasis on both oral and written Irish. We will ensure that an extended range of teaching approaches is employed across the curriculum and provide the pupils with more frequent opportunities to work collaboratively and to have good quality classroom discussions. The implementation of these recommendations will further enhance teaching and learning for the benefit of all our pupils.