

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	S N Maolmhaodhagh C
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Anne Street Dundalk Co. Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	15259C

Date of inspection: 23-01-2019



**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 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, 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	23-01-2019
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, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Malachy's Girls' School is a Catholic primary school situated in Dundalk, Co. Louth which operates under the care of the Dominican order since its foundation in 1833. The current enrolment is 258 pupils who are grouped into nine mainstream classes, ranging from second to sixth class. There are two full-time and one part-time teachers to support pupils with special educational needs. Attendance patterns are very good overall with school staff demonstrating careful vigilance in monitoring pupil attendance and taking action where required to address absenteeism.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Pupils demonstrate very good learning overall, although their scientific and digital learning skills are underdeveloped.
- Teaching is of a high standard overall with some very good practices noted; in a small number of instances, pupils' learning programmes are not sufficiently aligned to their prioritised needs and varying abilities.
- While summative and standardised assessment methods are used purposefully, the use of diagnostic assessment and assessment for learning approaches has not yet been fully realised in a few contexts.
- Support for pupils' well-being is very good; a strong culture of care along with a sense of belonging and appreciation for individual and cultural diversity is nurtured.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good; the principal demonstrates exemplary leadership skills as she works collaboratively with stakeholders to optimise learning and well-being.
- School self-evaluation practices have contributed to the development of whole-school approaches to teaching in a number of areas and these have impacted positively on pupils' learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school review of assessment practices should be undertaken with a view to extending the range of assessment approaches used across the curriculum, and in particular assessment for learning strategies.
- Teachers should ensure that learning programmes are consistently aligned to pupils' prioritised learning needs, with due regard for both pupils of higher ability as well as pupils with special educational needs.

- A whole-school approach should be adopted and carefully monitored to support the incremental development of pupils' scientific and digital learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is evident; they demonstrate positive learning dispositions and a reflective approach to their learning activities. Pupils work independently and collaboratively in a very purposeful and productive manner. They have regular opportunities to be active in their learning.
- Pupils experience a broad and enriching range of learning experiences with opportunity to develop and use many valuable skills in a variety of meaningful contexts. Additional opportunities to develop their scientific and digital learning skills will further enhance their learning. Pupils enjoy a broad range of experiences that facilitate the development and expression of their creativity while also engaging in activities that heighten their awareness of citizenship and healthy living.
- Pupils achieve, and at times, surpass the intended learning objectives of the lessons observed. There remains scope to extend and enhance learning in some instances to ensure pupils of higher ability are sufficiently challenged. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of key curricular concepts and in particular of local history and geography.
- Pupils are achieving well in literacy and numeracy with a significant number of them achieving highly. Their oral language skills are well-developed and they read fluently with suitable expression and understanding. Pupils enjoy opportunities to write in a variety of genre. They engage in mental Mathematics with positivity and ease, demonstrating well-developed reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Léiríonn fómhór na ndaltaí suim láidir agus scileanna labhartha an-mhaith sa Ghaeilge. *The majority of pupils show a strong interest and very good speaking skills in Irish.*
- Pupils have regular opportunities to perform through curricular and extra-curricular activities, with particular attention being given to ensuring pupils with additional needs have ample opportunities to take leading roles.
- Analysis of data from questionnaires administered to pupils during the inspection indicates that pupils view their learning experiences and achievements very positively.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good with some very good practice observed. Teachers model and foster enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning. They demonstrate competence and appropriate pedagogical skills required for the subjects of the primary curriculum.
- Teachers prepare diligently, and lessons observed were well-structured with differentiated tasks being provided in a number of instances. Overall, there remains scope to further develop differentiation practices to ensure learning is sufficiently challenging for all pupils.
- Teachers interact purposefully and positively with the pupils to stimulate and consolidate their learning. They enable pupils to work collaboratively and co-operatively.
- Teachers ensure that learning environments are stimulating and the quality of the many multi-sensory displays are highly commendable. The school is very well-resourced; the school and class libraries along with the multi-sensory room are worthy of note. Teachers use a wide

range of resources and methodologies effectively to support pupils learning, with some opportunities remaining to extend the use of technology as a medium of learning.

- Teachers facilitate inclusive learning environments and provide a variety of programmes to support pupils with additional needs; these include in-class support, team-teaching and withdrawal. Close liaison between the mainstream and special education teachers is a positive feature of practice. Teachers record and share their observations on pupils' learning during in-class support sessions. The *Continuum of Support* has been successfully adopted. In a minority of instances, provision for pupils could be better aligned to pupils' priority learning needs and greater use of diagnostic assessment would further support this.
- A systematic approach to the review and development of curricular plans is evident. There remains scope, however, to enhance a number of curricular plans in relation to the incremental development of skills including provision for writing genres in English, scientific skills and listening and responding in Music. While the curricular plans for subjects all include generic guidance on assessment, there remains scope to contextualise this further to provide more useful guidance that will inform teachers' individual and collective practice.
- Summative and standardised assessment is undertaken regularly in relation to a number of subjects and this information is used to monitor pupil progress. Elements of assessment for learning are evident in a number of settings. However, there is a need to develop a whole-school approach to support the incremental development of assessment for learning strategies. A whole-school approach to formative feedback with a particular focus on creative writing in English will enhance the quality of pupils' learning outcomes across the genres.
- An analysis of the responses provided by parents and pupils to the questionnaires administered during the inspection indicated high levels of satisfaction in relation to the quality of teaching provided in this school.

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

- The provision for pupils' well-being is excellent. Staff and stakeholders in the school community demonstrate a shared commitment to ensuring a strong culture of care and inclusion where pupils' self-esteem is nurtured.
- The whole-school emphasis on fostering pupils' sense of identity and belonging as individuals and as members of the school community is a significant strength of the school.
- A culture of respectful engagement is in strong evidence within this school community. Very good behaviour and affirming, caring interactions between pupils and also between pupils and teachers were noted during the inspection.
- Pupils are encouraged and supported to make decisions; routines and school activities provide regular opportunity for pupils to undertake responsibility and to develop their independence.
- The principal and the teachers demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of pupils' circumstances, family backgrounds, interest and skills and use this information in a timely, sensitive and productive manner to optimise support for them.
- There is a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' resilience and positive well-being through affirming everyday interactions and also through focused interventions such as the programme *Friends for Life*. The school participates in the *Health Promoting Schools'* programme and the *Green Schools'* Environmental Initiative which provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop positive attitudes and skills that will support healthy living and active citizenship.
- The questionnaire data provided by pupils and parents indicate very high levels of satisfaction in relation to the questions pertaining to pupil well-being.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The board of management engages in strategic planning to meet the evolving needs of the school in a proactive and timely manner. It demonstrates keen understanding of school procedures, along with high expectations regarding teaching and learning.
- The principal demonstrates exemplary management and leadership skills. She works collaboratively with the stakeholders to nurture strong teamwork and a culture of care and learning. She demonstrates very good capacity to lead improvement; she uses knowledge and understanding regarding the individual and collective needs and strengths of pupils and staff with great sensitivity and skill. The principal has a strong visible presence in classrooms, combining teaching with her other responsibilities.
- The in-school management team consists of a deputy principal and two assistant principals. They have been actively involved in policy review, co-ordination of curricular resources and of valuable school initiatives that contribute to smooth running and ongoing development of the school. Monitoring breadth and balance across the strands of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and continuity in pupils' learning from class to class has recently commenced and it is recommended that these good practices be extended across all curricular areas.
- An active parents' association supports the work of the school. Representatives report positively on various aspects of school activities including the range of communication channels and the quality of educational provision. In their questionnaire responses, parents indicated that they were satisfied with the school's organisation.
- 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 School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is very good. A very strong focus on professional reflection and ongoing improvement is evident among the staff and management body of this school. They have been very successful in leading and managing a significant number of improvement initiatives that have impacted positively on pupils' learning and development. The cyclical process of SSE as previously adopted has resulted in whole-school approaches to the development of pupils' comprehension skills in English and their mental mathematics.
- The staff has re-engaged with the SSE process and have availed of CPD to support them in enhancing teaching and learning in the area of SPHE. Strategies to support ongoing teaching and learning have been clearly delineated in the recently devised school improvement plan (SIP). The staff is encouraged to revisit the targets of the SIP to include targets that are framed in terms of pupils' learning and perspectives. Extending the involvement of parents and pupils in future SSE initiatives is advised.

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 St. Malachy's Girls' School welcomes the findings of this report and is encouraged by the affirmation it gives to our school community.

- The Board is happy that the school meets all the relevant criteria for Child Protection.
- We appreciate the acknowledgement of the high standard of teaching and learning within the school.
- The Board is delighted that the Inspectorate recognised that the provision for pupils' well-being is excellent. We are very proud of the whole-school emphasis on fostering pupils' sense of identity and well-being as individuals and as members of the school community, which promotes the very high standard of behaviour in our school.
- The Board fully supports the view that the overall quality of leadership and management is very good and that the principal demonstrates exemplary leadership skills as she works collaboratively with stakeholders to optimise learning and well-being.
- The Board appreciates the ongoing work and support of the parent association. We are delighted to acknowledge the very strong focus on professional reflection and ongoing improvement among the staff and management body of our school.
- The Board is very pleased that the analysis of data from questionnaires administered show that parents and pupils indicated high levels of satisfaction in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and pupil well-being.

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 of St. Malachy's Girls' School accepts and acknowledges the recommendations in the report and wishes to state its intention to review and address them in a timely fashion.

- We have commenced the review of our whole-school assessment policy to support the incremental development of assessment for learning strategies and to include a whole-school approach to formative feedback.
- We will ensure that learning programmes are consistently aligned to pupils' prioritised learning needs, with due regard for both pupils of higher ability as well as pupils with special educational needs.
- Since our inspection, the school has developed its Digital Learning Plan and has applied for additional funding as per the terms of the ICT Infrastructure Grant. We hope in the near future to upgrade our digital resources and to improve our digital learning skills.

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 <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;