

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Mount Bolus N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Mount Bolus Tullamore Co Offaly
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	15395K

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 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.
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 deputy principal• 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 to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Mount Bolus NS is a co-educational, rural school situated in the village of Mount Bolus, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. The school, which is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath, has two mainstream class teachers and a shared teacher who provides additional supports for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). There were 28 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation. Attendance is very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning is good although there needs to be a greater focus on the progression of learning as pupils transfer from class to class.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The quality of planning ranges from satisfactory to fair.
- The quality of assessment is satisfactory.
- The quality of care and support for the pupils' wellbeing is a significant strength of the school.
- The principal provides good leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should ensure that there is progression of pupils' learning as they transfer from class to class.
- Planning at whole-school and classroom level should be reviewed; whole-school curriculum plans should include a focus on skill development and should ensure the delivery of a spiral curriculum and the development and progression of learning for all pupils; classroom plans should be prepared on a fortnightly basis and should reflect the spiral nature of the curriculum and provide clear and relevant learning objectives.
- Teachers should gather and use assessment data to guide the differentiation of teaching and to help pupils develop strategies to improve their own work.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils are motivated to learn and engaged well in lessons observed during this evaluation. Pupils are capable of talking about and explaining many aspects of their learning.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well developed. Pupils can explain the reasoning and purpose of learning tasks they are engaged in. Teachers use a variety of effective questions to promote engagement in learning. There are regular opportunities to develop writing skills in the different genres. However, there is a need to create opportunities to extend work on the writing genres and for emergent writers to explore free writing in a purposeful, meaningful way. Work in this area should develop incrementally and reflect the progression of learning as pupils move up through the school.
- Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Léiríonn an chuid is mó de na daltaí cumas maith i dtuiscint na teanga. Tá sé tábhachtach go mbeadh deiseanna rialta acu an Ghaeilge a úsáid gach lá, le béim ar na daltaí a bheith ag caint lena chéile. Ba chóir go mbeadh an teanga nua luaite i scéimeanna agus go mbeadh deiseanna ag na daltaí an teanga seo a úsáid i dtascanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta. Moltar go múinfear raon seanraí scríbhneoireachta go foirmiúil. Tá sé fíorthábhachtach go mbeadh dul chun cinn soiléir ann nuair atá na daltaí ag bogadh ó rang go rang. *A positive approach to the Irish language is cultivated. Most pupils demonstrate a good ability to understand the language. It is important that they have regular opportunities to use Irish every day with an emphasis on pupils conversing with each other. New vocabulary should be noted in planning and pupils should use this new language in reading and writing tasks. The formal teaching of a range of writing genres is recommended. It is also very important that there is evidence of progression of learning as pupils move from class to class.*

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is characterised by good lesson structure with an appropriate balance between teacher instruction and pupils being active in their own learning. All teachers model the use of language very effectively. *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* has been successfully implemented in the junior room with very effective language learning and cross-curricular links taking place in both English and Irish. Pupils' skills in both languages should now be developed further throughout the school with discrete oral language topics identified and documented in short-term planning. In some curriculum areas, target language is identified and explicitly taught. The recording of key subject-specific vocabulary across curricular areas should become a consistent feature of all short-term plans.
- The quality of planning ranges from satisfactory to fair and regular planning was not available in all settings. All teachers are required to prepare short-term plans fortnightly, in advance, to guide their work in the classroom. These plans should provide clear and suitable learning objectives with due regard for the Primary School Curriculum and the School Plan. Learning objectives should be suitably differentiated for the specific class levels in this multi-grade context. Long-term plans and curriculum plans across all subject areas are available.

Whole-school curriculum plans need to be reviewed to include a focus on skill development and to ensure the delivery of a spiral curriculum and the development and progression of learning for all pupils. These plans also need to reflect the multi-grade context of the school by providing teachers with specific guidance as pupils progress from class to class.

- The quality of assessment is satisfactory. Assessment data is gathered in all classes and at whole-school level. Assessment should inform planning and help to make provision for differentiation to support and challenge all learners as they progress through the school. The teachers have started to use the continuum of support. Targets in SEN should be specific, measurable and used to inform regular reviews and assessment while supporting the progression of learning. The introduction of graded reading texts in the SEN setting to develop pupils' reading skills facilitates the careful tracking of progression of learning in the support area.
- Pupils' work is regularly monitored throughout the school with formative feedback provided. This practice should be used to track improvement and progression. Involving pupils in this practice will allow them take responsibility for their own learning and encourage them to become more independent learners.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school. Teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to the school and support pupils' educational, social and personal well-being. Teachers have developed links as required with external agencies to support pupils with additional needs and to ensure smooth transitions to and from primary school.
- The parents' association provides valuable support to the school and a sense of community was evident during the evaluation. All parents feel welcome in the school and agree that their child enjoys school and feels safe and well looked after in school.
- Highly respectful and positive interactions were observed in all settings throughout the evaluation. All pupils who responded to the questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation reported that they like this school, feel safe here and that they are treated fairly and respectfully. Pupil voice is nurtured and promoted through the Green School Committee at the senior end of the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is good. The board of management meets regularly and its accounts are certified annually. A broad range of administrative policies has been drawn up to support the management of the school.

- Management and leadership within the school is good, though there should be more of a focus on the progression of learning. The principal is ably assisted by the deputy principal and together they demonstrate a commitment to the holistic development of pupils. The principal and deputy principal meet regularly, both formally and informally, working collaboratively to create an inclusive community and learning environment.
- The school reported that it is open to providing placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, pupils and the teacher education institute.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good. The school has engaged very effectively with the SSE process and there is evidence of SSE impacting positively on teachers' practice in numeracy. The collaborative relationships within the school facilitate the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation.

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 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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Mountbolus National School welcomes the positive Whole School Evaluation MLL report which affirms the effective management and leadership in the school and the quality of teaching and learning.

The Board welcomes that the report recognises the school's significant strength in the quality of support for pupils' wellbeing and the staff's strong commitment to working collaboratively to create an inclusive learning environment where pupils feel safe and are treated fairly and respectfully.

The Board is pleased that the school's very effective engagement in School Self Evaluation was acknowledged and its positive impact on school practice affirmed.

Area 2 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 findings and recommendations contained in the report and confirms that plans to address recommendations are in place.