

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	Ballythomas NS
<b>School address</b>	Ballythomas Gorey Co Wexford
<b>Roll number</b>	154070

**Date of inspection: 08-04-2019**



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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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	08-04-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li><li>• Meeting with representative of the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representative</li><li>• Meeting with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and board of management representatives</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballythomas N S is a co-educational, rural school situated close to Gorey, Co. Wexford. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. The staff comprises four mainstream teachers and one special education teacher. At the time of the evaluation there were 82 pupils enrolled at the school and their attendance rates are generally very good.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good, pupils present as engaged, articulate learners.
- The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good practice also observed; there is an over-reliance on whole-class reading approaches and scope to extend differentiated instructions in Mathematics.
- Highly effective support for pupils' well-being is provided and there is a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in evidence.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is good; strong team-work and collegiality among staff is evident; there is scope to increase parental participation in decision making at the school.
- The overall quality of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is good; the school has re-engaged with the process and there is evidence of agreed actions in classrooms.
- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and care for pupils is a particular strength of the school.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should further develop its provision for differentiation in reading and Mathematics in terms of planning; resources and instruction and their impact on learning should be monitored regularly.
- The board of management should actively seek to develop a parents' association.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils learning is good. The pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning and present as engaged and articulate learners. Results from the pupil questionnaires show that almost all pupils agree that they like school and that it is a good school. Pupils could sing songs and recite poems with confidence in English and Irish.
- Pupils demonstrate very confident computation and problem-solving skills with many pupils able to articulate how they work out problems. It is noteworthy that in the questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, all parents agreed that the school is helping their child to progress with Mathematics.
- Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh deafach ag na daltaí don Ghaeilge. Pleann na daltaí, sa roinnt ranganna, a nuacht phearsanta agus a gcuid foghlaim. *It is clear that pupils have a positive attitude to Irish. In some classes pupils discuss personal news and learning.*
- Pupils can write in a range of genre and had good phonological awareness and presentation skills. In classroom observations, pupils could read with good fluency but some pupils struggled with comprehension. In questionnaire responses, a significant minority of pupils are not sure, or do not consider that they are doing well at reading. This should be further explored.
- Valuable and meaningful learner experiences were observed during the evaluation. Pupils use project work, games, a range of concrete materials and information and communicative technology (ICT) to support their learning. Excellent classroom displays and a well-resourced and maintained school yard are effectively used to support and celebrate pupils' learning. Play-based learning is prioritised in the early years.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good practice also observed. Teachers are hardworking, committed and have very effective classroom management skills. Warm, positive interactions were observed between teachers and pupils in all settings. Teachers are clear communicators and responses to the pupil questionnaires indicate that almost all pupils consider that their teacher explains things clearly. Where highly-effective practice was observed teachers shared the learning intention with pupils at the outset of the lesson and then used a combination of direct teaching and guided discovery experiences to enable pupils learn the necessary skills and knowledge. In these settings pupil progress was very evident.
- Novels, differentiated readers and class readers are used to teach reading. The school is commended for trialling guided reading in some classes. During classroom observations reading was listened to by the teacher rather than explicitly taught and where skills were taught, this was done in isolation. It is recommended that a differentiated reading programme where skills are taught and practiced in context be agreed and implemented throughout the school. The impact of these programmes should be regularly reviewed and adapted, if necessary. The school should arrange whole-school in-service for teachers on reading instruction.
- Very good use of concrete resources and oral mathematics was observed in the teaching of Mathematics. Some very good differentiated teaching is emerging, through the use of in-class support. It is advised that this highly effective practice be further extended and embedded across the school.

- Provision for pupils with SEN is highly praised. Lessons observed were affirming, positive and skills based. Targets are clear, specific and measurable. The teacher's commitment to the implementation of a variety of teaching approaches including team-teaching and in-class support is highly commendable.
- The quality of assessment is commendable. Teachers maintain a comprehensive file on pupils' progress. In some settings, formative feedback is added to copybooks to help pupils understand how to improve their work and learning intentions were shared with pupils. This work should be extended to all classes. The addition of regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and represent their learning within the conclusion of lessons is advised.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school and there is a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in evidence.
- The holistic development of pupils is prioritised and a wide range of co-curricular activities is organised by teachers to support pupils' development and resilience. Teachers are very aware of the importance of developing pupils' well-being and actively strive to be good role models through their adherence to the healthy eating policy, their weekly school walks and through their teaching of resilience programmes.
- The pupils demonstrate a pride in their school and are eager to discuss the merits and strengths of their school. In questionnaire responses the majority of pupils indicated that they do not know or do not consider that they have a say in how things are done at the school. The school should investigate structures to augment the role of pupils in decision-making.
- There is very good communication between parents and the school. The school uses a range of methods to communicate with parents and encourages two way communication. Parent representatives report that parents are involved in a wide range of aspects of school life and support the school in a number of ways. At present, there is no parents' association at the school. In order to further enhance the role of parents, it is recommended that the school should actively seek their views more regularly, particularly in the creation of policy and procedures. The development of an active parents' association is advised to support this work.

### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The board issues an agreed report to stakeholders after each board meeting and has recently engaged in focused training. The board should actively encourage and promote the development of a parents' association and the support of outside agencies should be sought to progress this work.
- The principal is highly dedicated, caring and interested in the school and its pupils. She works hard to maintain positive relationships with parents, pupils and teachers. The deputy principal provides valuable organisational and administrative support to the principal. As the in school management team (ISM) is due to expand, it is timely to prioritise its curriculum leadership role and ensure that improvements in teaching, planning and assessment are agreed, documented and implemented.
- The teachers are highly commended for the collegiately and team spirit which is so evident in the school. Teachers have responsibilities in addition to their teaching duties and share their talents with generosity and flair.

## **5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The overall quality of SSE is good, the school has re-engaged with the process and there is evidence of agreed actions in classrooms. The school has sought the viewpoints of parents and pupils in creating the plan. In order to increase the impact of these actions the school should write clear targets that can be measured and tracked and ensure that actions are leading to improvements in teaching and learning.

Given the interest and professionalism of the staff, the capacity of the school to improve is very good.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <b>very good</b> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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**

Ballythomas National School's Board of Management are pleased with the many positive findings in the report.

The report endorses the good standards of teaching and learning achieved in the school, while also recognising the highly effective support for pupils' wellbeing and our welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.

The Board was very happy that the quality of our SEN provision is a particular strength of 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.**

The Board find the recommendations of the report very helpful and are committed to investigating and implementing them.

The school's teaching staff together with the Board of Management, will collaboratively review each recommendation and plan for its implementation in order to further enhance teaching and learning for the benefit of all our pupils and their families.