

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Raphoe Central National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Mc Bride Street Raphoe Lifford County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16138S

Date of inspection: 11-02-2019



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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	11-02-2019
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 and pupil questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Raphoe Central National School is a co-educational primary school under the joint patronage of the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal and the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion, and in the School Completion Programme (SCP). Currently, there are 195 pupils enrolled across seven mainstream classrooms. There are four support teachers based in the school and one teacher based elsewhere. School attendance levels of pupils are good and targets are in place to continue to improve pupil attendance.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall learning achievements are very good; pupils engage very successfully in a wide range of learning experiences.
- The overall quality of teaching is very effective but process writing in Irish is not incrementally developed throughout the school.
- The quality of assessment is good; assessment for learning (AfL) is not implemented consistently in all classes and assessment data is not used purposefully to inform differentiated approaches in individual teachers' classrooms.
- The support for pupils' well-being is of a very high standard.
- School leadership and management is highly effective; the board of management and in-school leadership team actively promote a culture of collaboration and improvement.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good; whole school approaches have impacted positively on teaching and on pupils' learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should plan more purposefully for the implementation of process writing in Irish to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning from class to class.
- Assessment for learning and results of assessment data should be used more effectively to inform and improve teachers' differentiated approaches in every classroom.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall learning achievements are very good; there is evidence that the learning outcomes for pupils, including those with special and additional needs, are improving in accordance with the objectives and skills in the *Primary School Curriculum*. The pupils engage very successfully in a wide range of learning experiences including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education.
- The pupils' enjoyment in learning is clearly evident through their active engagement in enquiry-based learning activities particularly in Geography in the strand of *Environmental awareness and care* and *People and other lands*. They can work independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner and demonstrate a high level of interest and participation in learning. Pupils' skills are well developed in *Exploring and making drama* and they demonstrate their ability to co-operate and communicate with others in and out of character roles. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation, the majority of pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning; however, a small number of pupils indicated that they do not work in groups most days.
- The quality of pupils' learning in literacy is of very high quality. Their early reading and writing skills are based on experiential learning activities and pupils' phonemic awareness is well developed. In the infant classes, pupils have access to playful learning experiences as part of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Their oral skills are being systematically developed through integrated thematic topics.
- Pupils' learning in Mathematics is highly commendable. They have a good knowledge of the value of Mathematics in their environment. In the strand *Shape and space*, pupils were able to make good links between their knowledge in mathematical tables and problem solving in 3D shapes. Pupils have access to and utilise relevant mathematical resources; however, further use of manipulatives would enhance all pupils' understanding of concepts.
- The examples on display in the strands of *Fabric and fibre*, *Print and Drawing* in the Visual Arts curriculum demonstrated a very good knowledge in their awareness of line, colour and texture. Pupils illustrated an awareness of famous artists through their own artwork. Pupils' project work in Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) is particularly noteworthy; they can discuss and explain their completed work competently. In Music, pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the concepts of *Pulse and Duration*.
- Sa Ghaeilge, is féidir leis na daltaí páirt ghníomhach a ghlacadh in imirt cluichí teanga agus úsáideann siad an teanga nua-fhoghlamtha go cumasach le linn na gceachtanna. Chun cur leis an dea-chleachtas seo, ba chóir breis aire a dhiriú ar fhorbairt scileanna scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí i raon níos leithne seánraí. *Pupils actively engage in language games and they use the new acquired vocabulary capably during lessons. To build on this good practice, additional attention should be paid to the development of pupils' writing skills in a wider range of genre.*

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very effective. Teaching approaches are impacting positively on learner outcomes. Purposeful talk and discussion is a regular feature during lessons. Learning environments throughout the school were stimulating with stimulating displays in literacy, Mathematics, SESE and Visual Arts.
- The quality of planning is good. Whole-school curriculum plans have been developed for all subject areas. Teachers' short-term planning contains clear content objectives and learning

activities to guide the implementation of most subject areas in a progressive manner. Integration of curricular areas is evident and literacy and numeracy approaches are well developed; however the progressive development of process writing in Irish should be developed at whole-school level.

- Teachers have included elements from the *Primary Language Curriculum (PLC)* to outline learning outcomes and progression milestones for both languages. The targets as set out in the DEIS plan are impacting positively in learner outcomes.
- Teachers use a purposeful range of questioning techniques and explicitly teach the specific-mathematics vocabulary. Pupils' responses to teacher questions demonstrate a very good knowledge of concepts taught and they are afforded opportunities to discuss and explain mathematical thinking. There is potential for the greater use of more challenging activities to support differentiation for those pupils who have achieved mastery of the various strand units in Mathematics.
- Teachers use digital technologies very effectively to support pupils' learning. In Irish, pupils reading skills are developed incrementally through effective use of interactive technologies.
- Pupils' reading skills in English are well developed through effective use of reading approaches. Pupils can read with fluency and understanding. While the pupils have access to a broad variety of texts, the systematic use of graded readers would enhance provision in both English and Irish. Teachers use very successful approaches in developing pupils' writing skills in English; pupils can draw and create emergent texts taking part in collaborative writing with the teachers as scribe in the junior classes. Effective approaches were observed in teaching procedural writing in the middle classes.
- A praiseworthy feature of teachers' collective practice is the significant commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) and the sharing of expertise and knowledge gained through these courses.
- Overall, the quality of teaching provided for pupils with SEN is of a very high standard. The *Continuum of Support* is implemented very effectively. Interventions are delivered in a well-organised and nurturing manner. Station-teaching is implemented very skilfully in the junior classes to support early reading and phonological skills. Recording of progress supports the monitoring of pupils' learning outcomes in this area. Individual plans should be developed for pupils who are exempt from Irish. Special education teachers have good pedagogical knowledge and have developed effective working relationships with external agencies.
- The quality of assessment overall is good. Teachers correct pupils' work and provide constructive feedback. Where very good practice was observed, learning intentions and success criteria were shared at the beginning of lessons. In a few classrooms teachers strategically select and use approaches to open up further learning opportunities to meet the learning needs of pupils. This good practice should be extended to all classrooms. In questionnaire results, a significant minority did not know how they were doing at Mathematics. Some pupils reflect on their progress; in extending this practice, pupils should be afforded opportunities to develop a sense of ownership of their work and to set meaningful goals for themselves. It is recommended that the good practice in terms of pupils' self-assessment and peer-assessment observed in some classrooms should be developed incrementally across the school.
- Standardised and diagnostic tests are administered, results are analysed and pupil progress is tracked. There is evidence from standardised test results that there have been significant improvements in reading and mathematical attainments. Specific targets are outlined in teachers' support plans in the majority of classrooms for pupils with identified need. All teachers should ensure that the targets outlined are specific and measurable to inform and

improve teachers' differentiated approaches. Assessment data should also be used more effectively to inform differentiated teaching approaches in classrooms.

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

- The support for pupils' well-being is very effective and a noteworthy strength of this school. A warm welcoming, inclusive atmosphere permeates the school. The principal and staff foster a genuine commitment to the holistic development of each pupil. Respectful interactions between teachers and pupils and their peers were evident.
- At whole-school level, many aspects of provision make an important contribution to the wellbeing of pupils including participation in the Friends for Life programme. There are commendable initiatives in place to support pupils in making transitions to and from primary school.
- There is a good emphasis on Physical Education (PE) and wellbeing. As part of the SSE process the school has successfully focused on PE and emotional wellbeing to coincide with their planning for the Active Flag. Teachers share expertise in the areas of *Dance* and *Gymnastics*. The school participates in a number of community and school-based initiatives and it has received many awards including Junior Entrepreneur, Green Flags and the Active Flag. Teachers have also worked collaboratively to enhance pupils' digital literacy skills and have achieved the Digital School of Distinction status.
- Pupils' opinions are valued and included in the decision-making process. The pupil council is democratically elected and enabled to take a lead in various initiatives in the school. In Inspectorate questionnaires, the majority of pupils agreed that they have a say in how things are done in the school.
- There is a school book-rental scheme in place and external tutors are employed and funded through the SCP for various wellbeing initiatives. In their responses to questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that their child is safe and well looked after and most agreed that discipline is good in the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very effective. The board of management meets regularly, minutes are maintained and a financial statement is provided at each meeting. Board members are well informed regarding pupil attainments and progression. The board reviews policies regularly and provides an agreed report for the school community after every board meeting.
- The principal provides effective leadership for the school community, successfully promoting high standards. In her work, she displays a deep commitment and diligence to the holistic development of pupils. She encourages a collaborative culture amongst staff. The principal ensures that actions implemented lead to measurable and identifiable improvements in learner outcomes. She empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning effectively through the distribution of specific curriculum leadership. The in-school leadership team contribute purposefully to the professional learning of staff in their assigned areas. To build on current very effective practice, the teachers with assigned responsibilities should use *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* to lead developments in prioritised curricular areas in a systematic manner.
- Home-school communication is very good and is maintained through regular newsletters, texts and the school website. Parents are afforded regular opportunities to meet with school staff and participate actively in a range of in-class initiatives. The partnership with parents is

central to the school. Policies are shared with all parents before ratification and courses are provided to engage parents in their children's learning.

- The school provides placement for student teachers which has valuable benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has engaged very effectively with the SSE process and there is evidence that agreed targets and actions are having a positive impact on teaching and learning in classrooms. The actions have incorporated effective approaches to the development of literacy, numeracy, PE and emotional wellbeing.
- Current priorities include oral language development in Irish and the implementation of the PLC. Specific targeted actions are outlined in the school improvement plan to support teachers' approaches and pupils' learning in Irish. The outcomes of the school's self-evaluation process have been communicated to the board of management, staff and to all parents.

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 welcomes the findings of the WSE-MLL report and is encouraged by the positive affirmation contained within the report for the whole school community. The Board is pleased with the recognition given to the fact that support for pupil wellbeing is a noteworthy strength because the holistic development of our pupils is an important focus for our school. We are happy with the acknowledgement that the overall quality of teaching is very effective, that learning achievements are very good and that pupil enjoyment in learning is clearly evident within the school. The Board welcomes the report's recognition of the positive effects that a number of programmes which we engage in have on our pupils and that targets set in our DEIS plan are impacting positively on learner outcomes.

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 accepts the recommendations made in the report and will undertake to ensure that a plan of action is implemented.

We will review our Assessment Policy with a view to initiating a whole school approach to more effective use of data for planning and differentiation.

Process writing in Irish will be reviewed and a progression plan put in place to ensure continuity and development through all classes.

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 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;