

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

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

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Ath Treasna G N S
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Poundhill Newmarket Co. Cork
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	16648S

**Date of inspection: 21-11-2019**



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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 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>	18/11/10 – 21/11/2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li> <li>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</li> <li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li> <li>• Meeting with teachers</li> <li>• Meeting with representatives of the student council</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 to parent and board of management representatives</li> </ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ath Treasna national school is an all-girls school situated on the outskirts of the town of Newmarket. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne and presently 120 girls are enrolled. The school has a staffing of five mainstream teachers and one special education teacher (SET).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils’ learning is good with very high quality learning outcomes in Irish, English and Mathematics; pupils would benefit from the organising of further learning opportunities to promote independent learning and skills development.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good in mainstream and special education settings: the development of learning outcomes in the Visual Arts and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) require attention.
- The assessment of pupil progress across the curriculum is of a very high standard and informs the planning and delivery of lessons.
- Very high quality support is provided for pupils’ wellbeing; pupils present as confident individuals who have the ability to create and maintain supportive relationships and to make informed choices
- The quality of leadership and management is very good; there is a very strong sense of community in the school and a palpable commitment to providing optimum opportunities for all the pupils.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good and school improvement plans have impacted positively on practice and pupil attainment.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pupils should be provided with a wider range of opportunities across the curriculum to develop subject-specific skills and independent work which promotes decision making, reflection and dialogue.
- In the Visual Arts and in SESE increased emphasis should be placed on building on pupils’ existing knowledge and experiences to ensure progression and development in their learning outcomes.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning is good with very high quality learning outcomes in Irish, English and Mathematics. Pupils' ability to communicate, read and write in both English and Irish is very good and enhances their ability to access all other areas of the curriculum. The exploration of a wider range of challenging reading materials in both languages is advised.
- Pupils' ability to use and understand mathematical language and their confidence in approaching problem-solving activities are notable features of their learning in Mathematics and attest to the very high standards which they have attained.
- In all other areas of the curriculum, pupil attainment is good and very good in some strand units of specific subject areas. In Music, all pupils were observed to participate in the school choir and they sing and play music to a very high standard. In Physical Education, a commendable balance is struck between competitive and non-competitive activities and an emphasis is placed on enjoyment, participation and physical fitness. Samples of pupils' work in the Visual Arts are attractively displayed in classrooms and shared areas. These displays indicate that pupils are facilitated to respond personally to artistic stimuli and to acquire techniques and skills necessary for creative expression in different art forms.
- The pupils have developed good skills aligned with subject areas. They were observed to engage with activities that progressed their understanding of change and continuity, time and chronology, and their working as a historian, geographer and scientist. However, it is recommended that they be provided with increased opportunities to develop subject related skills, particularly in the areas of design and making in Visual Arts and Science. The organising of pupil-initiated learning activities which promote independent work, decision making, reflection and dialogue across the curriculum should assist in this regard.
- Pupils present as highly motivated learners. They consistently strive to achieve the high expectations set for them and show perseverance when faced with new and appropriately challenging learning. They are provided with a commendable range of learning experiences, including regular field-trips, outings to galleries, pantomimes and musical performances. When working in pairs and groups, they display very good team-working skills. They learn and derive enjoyment from their participation in a very wide range of extra and co-curricular activities. These include singing in the choir at community events, and taking part in sporting activities and dramatic performances. Pupils in the infant class benefit from engaging in play-based learning activities informed by *Aistear; The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The school is advised to further develop play-based approaches and to build on the very good practice established.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very good in mainstream and special education settings. Commendable effort is made to devise learning opportunities which engage pupils and progress pupil attainment. Teachers have clear learning intentions for lessons and are advised to share these more regularly with pupils. Teacher questioning was of a high standard although more open-ended questioning would be beneficial in extending pupils' learning and deepening their understanding. Pupils were observed to confidently engage with digital technologies, maps, artefacts, photographs, and a variety of concrete materials in mathematics lessons. In the Arts and in SESE, increased emphasis should be placed on building on pupils' existing knowledge and experiences to ensure progression and development in their learning outcomes.

- Assessment practices in the school are very good. Teachers regularly assess pupil progress in all subject areas and data generated informs planning and delivery of lessons. Immediate assistance is given to those who struggle to attain learning outcomes and if difficulties persist, interventions in the form of team teaching, station teaching and withdrawal of pupils are organised. Individual education plans are drafted in consultation with parents and with pupil input where appropriate. Diagnostic tests are utilised effectively to identify specific learning difficulties. The school has begun to promote pupil self-assessment practices to good effect. Continued focus on developing strategies to enable pupils to identify their learning strengths and areas in need of development is advised.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELLBEING**

- Very high quality support is provided for pupils' wellbeing. The Social, Personal and Health Education programme is consistently implemented and supported through the delivery of the Stay Safe and Relationship and Sexuality Education programmes. Responses to questionnaires issued to parents and pupils indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the level of care that the school provides.
- The school building and environments are attractive and child friendly. Resources to support pupils to play collaboratively are provided at break times. A healthy eating policy is effectively implemented. Pupils' engagement in active lifestyles and their regular attendance are acknowledged and celebrated.
- The student council plays an active part in school life. The council meets regularly and members display a commendable commitment to representing their peers and working with the school in providing for the needs of pupils.
- Pupils present as confident individuals who have the ability to create and maintain supportive relationships and to make informed choices. They show patience and tolerance for the views of others and have studied aspects of racism and discrimination in lessons.

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

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. There is a very strong sense of community in the school and a palpable commitment to providing optimum opportunities for all the pupils. Collectively, the board of management, parents' association, student council and school staff work to ensure that a safe environment in which pupils, regardless of ability, can flourish. The board meets regularly, is well informed of pupil progress in key areas and is highly supportive of the school. The parents' association is very active and representatives report that relationships and communication between it and the board and school are very good. Together, the board and parents have completed a major building project resulting in a suitable, comfortable learning environment for pupils and staff.
- The school communicates regularly with parents through the texts, letters home, the school website, biannual newsletters and through the parents' association. The board of management reports annually to parents on its work and communicates a shared report following its meetings.
- The principal is highly effective and discharges her duties in a manner that reflects her deep commitment to meeting the needs of the pupils and staff and to ensuring that the school is an integral part of the community it serves. She is very ably assisted by the deputy and assistant principal, both of whom discharge their duties in a highly conscientious manner. Each member

of the in-school leadership team plays a key role in leading teaching and learning and in promoting best practice.

- The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is highly praised and provides 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 is very good. Previous school improvement plans in numeracy and literacy have impacted positively on pupil learning outcomes. The current plan outlines targets and actions aimed at promoting and improving pupils' ability to speak in Irish and on the use of digital technologies to support learning. Identified actions are implemented consistently in all learning settings. School improvement priorities have resulted in changed practices. There is a need to reflect these changes in whole-school curriculum plans. In future reviews of these documents, a focus should be directed towards ensuring continuity and progression in pupils' experience of the curriculum, particularly in SESE.

## 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**

The Board of Management of Áth Trasna Girls' School welcomes this WSE-MLL report and is encouraged by the affirmation that it gives our school. It praises the very high standard of teaching in the school as well as the very high learning outcomes achieved by the pupils in English, Irish, Mathematics and in Music. It also acknowledges and praises the very high standard of pupil achievement, pupil support and wellbeing, leadership and management and self-evaluation in the school.

We are pleased that this report acknowledges the hard work, dedication and commitment and 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.**

The Board accepts the recommendations in the report and is committed to implementing them.

The Board and staff will review the subject skills of the curriculum and will plan greater opportunities for pupil to lead learning activities which promote these skills.

The Board and the staff will review the learning outcomes in the school plans in the Visual Arts and SESE to ensure progression and continuity that better reflect the spiral nature of the curriculum.