

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Áth Eascrach Chuain
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Béal Átha na Sluaighe Contae na Gaillimhe
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16982H

Date of inspection: 22-03-2019



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 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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1, 2, 5, and 6 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	22-03-2019
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• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Áth Eascrach Chuain is a one-teacher co-educational school located in the village of Ahascragh, County Galway. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. The staff consists of a teaching principal, a shared special education teacher (SET) and a classroom assistant funded by the board of management. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. At the time of the evaluation, there were four pupils in attendance across third, fifth and sixth class and their attendance levels were very good. In the context of such low pupil enrolment, the future viability of the school is a matter of concern for the school community.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall learning achievements of pupils are satisfactory; pupils present as motivated and enthusiastic learners.
- The quality of teaching is fair overall; many strands of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) are not being taught.
- The overall quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is appropriate.
- The overall quality of school leadership and management is weak; the board of management does not fulfil its roles and responsibilities effectively and the instructional leadership role of the principal has scope for improvement.
- The quality of engagement in school self-evaluation (SSE) is poor.
- The school is not fully compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that classroom planning and practice should fully reflect the strands and strand units of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), so as to ensure pupils have access to a broader, more balanced curriculum.
- The board should increase its awareness about its role and responsibilities, and should access training opportunities to enable it to discharge those duties and responsibilities in accordance with the Education Act, 1998.
- The principal's instructional leadership role should be developed to include more effective curricular implementation.
- As a matter of urgency, the board should address the deficiencies in its compliance with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- Overall learning achievements of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils presented as enthusiastic and motivated to learn. Most pupils achieve good results in standardised literacy and numeracy tests.
- In Mathematics, the pupils responded very well to questioning and demonstrated good understanding of mathematical concepts. Their grasp of mathematical language was praiseworthy. Pupils' knowledge of tables and ability to solve problems were commendable.
- Pupils read with fluency and had a good knowledge of spelling and grammar. The pupils could recite a variety of poems with enthusiasm. While pupils are motivated to read, the reading experiences provided to them are limited. Teachers should ensure that pupils are reading at their instructional level and are provided with a variety of differentiated reading programmes, including the use of novels. The pupils have many opportunities to engage in independent creative writing tasks. The use of word processing software to present pupils' creative writing is highly praiseworthy.
- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán measartha ag baint le torthaí foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. Tá amhráin agus foclóir cuí ar eolas ag na daltaí ach tá deacrachtaí ag na daltaí ceisteanna a fhreagairt. Is gá leibhéil inniúlachta agus caighdeán cumarsáide na ndaltaí a ardú sa Ghaeilge. *Overall, pupils' learning outcomes in Irish are of a fair standard. Pupils know songs and appropriate vocabulary; however, they have difficulties answering questions. There is a need to raise pupils' level of competence and standard of communication in Irish.*
- Pupils describe and discuss their learning experiences effectively in those subject areas in which they have engaged. They particularly enjoy participating in song singing and visual arts.
- In the lessons observed, the quality of pupils' learning experiences ranged from good to weak. In half of the lessons, learning activities were insufficiently challenging and did not develop pupils' knowledge and skills to a sufficient degree. Opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative work and in the use of the local environment should be extended.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching observed was fair overall; it ranged from good to weak in the lessons observed.
- In a minority of lessons, there was commendable emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary, a range of teaching methodologies was employed and tasks were differentiated in line with pupil ability. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used appropriately as a teaching tool during a few lessons. There is significant scope to extend these high-quality approaches to teaching across all subject areas.
- Classroom planning is focused unduly on the delivery of textbook content. Many strands of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) are not being taught. It is necessary to undertake a review of curriculum provision in the school. It is recommended that classroom planning and practice align much more closely with the *Primary School Curriculum*. This would ensure the implementation of a broader, more balanced curriculum and provide more opportunities for activity-based learning for the pupils.
- An effective combination of withdrawal and in-class support is provided by the SET teacher. In the withdrawal setting, the lessons observed were well structured and appropriate to the pupils' needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) are used to record and track pupils' progress.

- The overall quality of assessment is fair. Good use is made of teacher-designed tests and tasks. Standardised tests in English and Mathematics are carried out annually. Diagnostic assessment should be conducted to identify pupils' individual learning needs. To ensure pupils are making progress in line with their abilities, the school should administer a standardised ability test.

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

- Support for pupils' wellbeing is appropriate. During the evaluation, pupils were well behaved and courteous. Interactions between teachers, pupils and the care assistant were respectful. Pupils reported that they like school and enjoy their learning.
- Links have been established with support agencies. The school actively engages with recommendations made from relevant agencies to support the needs of individual pupils.
- During the parent interview, the parent nominee on the board of management stated that pupils are well looked after in school and expressed satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is weak. The board does not fulfil its roles and responsibilities effectively, in particular its legislative requirements. The board does not hold the required five meetings within a school year and arrangements for board meetings should adhere to the requirements outlined in the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019*. Strategic planning is not undertaken. There is currently no clear process for implementing, monitoring and reviewing whole-school policies and plans and this process should be established as a priority. The board has not accessed training. As a matter of urgency, the board should access training opportunities, in order to ensure that it provides good governance and fulfils its roles and responsibilities, in accordance with the Education Act, 1998. School accounts are certified annually.
- The instructional leadership role of the principal needs to be developed. While curriculum plans are available for each subject, they are generic in nature and do not provide specific guidance on curriculum implementation in the classroom and should be revised.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of engagement in SSE is poor. While the principal provided a DEIS Action Plan for Improvement, the board of management was not aware of the DEIS status of the school or therefore familiar with the DEIS Action Plan. SSE reports and school improvement plans (SIPs) have been formulated in the past on aspects of literacy and numeracy. However, specific targets or actions for improvement were not identified.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection

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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 has amended and is now compliant with the Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment Policy, as was seen by the Inspector on April 30th.

Classroom teacher will ensure future planning and practice will incorporate all strands and strand units of the Primary School Curriculum.

The incoming board of management will be made aware of the roles and responsibilities involved and will seek access to training opportunities where provided.

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;