An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>S N Bhreandáin Naofa</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Nagh Coillidhe</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ballyfoyle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co Kilkenny</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17093E</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 08-11-2016
WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?
Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils’ wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>08-11-2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with principal and deputy principal</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>• Meeting with parent representatives</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with teachers</td>
<td>Feedback to senior management team and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Brendan’s NS is a rural school, 10 km north of Kilkenny city. It serves the two areas of the parish, Muckalee and Ballyfoyle. It is an eleven teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The school’s current enrolment of 225 represents a steady increase in recent years. The attendance of the majority of the pupils is very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• The quality of teaching and learning in the school is good: the teachers are open to embracing new approaches and the pupils are eager to learn.
• Effective leadership ensures the smooth running of the school; the board and parents’ association are dedicated to the school.
• The school is closely associated with both areas of the parish and is committed to fostering positive community relationships.
• The pupils are encouraged to read and enjoy reading; the greater use of differentiated readers and structured early intervention models would further extend engagement with reading.
• A variety of appropriate assessment practices are in use by the teachers: greater use of the data gathered would support more differentiated teaching.
• The support for pupils’ well-being is very good: teachers provide pupils with a high level of education, respect and nurturing and the pupils in turn behave well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• To further extend engagement in reading, additional attention should be given to differentiated instruction and the extension of the use of graded readers, together with the extension of early intervention models.
• Assessment data should be used more consistently to inform programme planning and differentiated teaching.
1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are good. They are eager to learn and engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities.
- There is effective practice in the area of Mathematics. Overall strengths in pupils’ learning are in the computational and operational areas and their problem solving skills have been prioritised for development. Station teaching and Mata sa Rang are used purposefully to support pupils’ learning. In some settings, manipulatives were expertly employed to support pupils’ active engagement in their learning and this good practice should be extended to all settings.
- The quality of pupils’ achievement in literacy is good. The implementation of Aistear enables valuable focus on early oral language development. The schools’ promotion of comprehension skills is praised. The pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and in the questionnaires most pupils stated that they are doing well at reading. To further extend engagement in reading, attention should be given to differentiated instruction and the extension of the use of graded readers. The systematic implementation of structured early intervention literacy models such as Literacy Lift Off should also be considered. Pupils are encouraged to write in a variety of genres and they produce some good quality written work. The focus on poetry and the writing of poems is noteworthy.
- Throughout the school the pupils’ art work is attractively displayed. Music is promoted in the school and the school choir performs to a high standard. The school has been awarded a blue flag, as an Active School and promotes a variety of sporting activities. The senior classes are currently pursuing the Junior Entrepreneur award. STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) are a commendable feature of the work in one of the classes.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. The areas of strength observed included good linkage and integration, positive pupil teacher rapport and openness to adopting new initiatives to enhance teaching and learning. In some settings teachers made skilful use of active methodologies and in ensuring that pupils were meaningfully challenged. It is advised that these approaches be applied more consistently across the school. In the questionnaires, almost all parents reported that teaching is good in the school and that their child is doing well. The pupils in the questionnaire responses reported very positively on the enjoyment of their lessons and on the quality of their instruction.
- Sa Ghaeilge, usáideann na h-oid cluichí, teicneolaíocht eolais agus chumarsaide (TEC) agus acmhainní praiticiúla chun foclóir agus frasaí a mhúineadh. Ta foclóir mhaith gnothaithe ag na daltaí ach ta se riachtanach go dtugtar breis deiseanna dóibh chun an foclóir sin a úsáid á dhéantadh. Ta réime agus amhráin de ghlanmheabhair ag na daltaí. Chun fior cheimniú agus forbairt chorosach a threisiú ní mór réimse na teanga do gach rangleibhéil a shoileirí sa phlean scoile.

In Irish, teachers use games, ICT and practical resources to teach vocabulary and phrases. The pupils have acquired a good vocabulary but they require further opportunities to use that vocabulary and phrases accurately. The pupils know a good variety of poems and songs. To strengthen progression and systematic development, the range of language for each class level should be clarified in the school plan.
• Support teachers have established very positive and affirming relationships with pupils and there is effective communication with parents. The school is praised for its recent adoption of team teaching initiatives and their continued review and development is advised. More focused target-setting would assist in monitoring pupil progress.
• Overall, the quality of assessment is good and a variety of appropriate assessment practices are in use by teachers, including regular testing and the correction and monitoring of pupils’ work. In some settings there is potential to use assessment data more meaningfully to inform programme planning and differentiated teaching.

3. SUPPORT FOR PUPIL’S WELL-BEING

• The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is very good. There is a culture of collegiality among the staff and members work closely together to provide the pupils with a high level of education, respect and nurturing. The pupils in turn behave well and engage in all activities with enthusiasm.
• Suitable co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are organised within the school community which enrich pupils’ educational experiences and foster their self-esteem. Overall in the school there is a strong emphasis on the holistic development of the pupils.
• In the pupil questionnaire responses, it is noteworthy that almost all pupils reported that this is a good school and that they feel safe in school.
• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

• The quality of leadership and management is commendable. The board of management meets regularly and is committed to the school. The safety and well-being of the pupils as well as the provision of quality education is the focus of its work. The Chairperson visits regularly and is very informed of school matters.
• The principal promotes a positive school climate and good working relationships. He attends effectively to the administration and day to day management of the school. He has a clear vision for the school and successfully leads its realisation. He mediates change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education.
• The in-school management team diligently supports the work of the principal and carry out their duties with competence and enthusiasm. Going forward the team should now prioritise whole-school approaches to curriculum planning and delivery.
• The school is closely associated with both areas of the parish and central to its ethos is the fostering of positive community relationships. The parent’s association (PA) works industriously to support the school through fund-raising and the organisation of a variety of school related activities. In discussion, PA representatives strongly endorsed all aspects of school provision. In questionnaires, almost all parents indicated that they felt welcome in the school, that their children were doing well and that overall they were happy with the school.
5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has engaged in school self-evaluation (SSE). A range of whole-school approaches to aspects of literacy and numeracy have been agreed and are being implemented. Going forward it is advised that clear and measurable targets be set to facilitate the ongoing monitoring and evaluating of pupils’ progress.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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