Whole School Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aimiento / School Name</th>
<th>Saint Clare’s National School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile/ School Address</td>
<td>Enniskillen Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manorhamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Leitrim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17233R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 08-11-2017
WHAT IS WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION?

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school. In addition to evaluating leadership and management, school planning and self-evaluation, and support for pupils, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and one other subject.

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 leadership and management
2. The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. The quality of support for pupils

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.
Whole-School Evaluation

Date of inspection  08-11-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
<th>Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with principal</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with board of management</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with in-school management team</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with parent representatives</td>
<td>• Feedback to senior management team and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to parent representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feedback to board of management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Saint Clare’s National School is an urban, co-educational school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. The attendance patterns of the 221 pupils enrolled are very good overall. The school has an administrative principal, eight mainstream teachers and three special education teachers including a teacher shared with another school. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and History was evaluated.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The quality of school leadership and management is very good; the work of the board of management is very effective and the principal and in-school management team (ISM) lead teaching and learning in a highly commendable manner.
• The overall learning achievements of pupils in English and History are very good while the provision of learning experiences in Irish and Mathematics are good; more-able pupils were not challenged sufficiently during mathematics lessons and there was scope to enhance pupils’ communication skills in Irish.
• The overall quality of teaching is good, with exemplary teaching observed in a significant minority of classrooms.
• The quality of support for pupils is very good.
• The quality of school planning is very good; a strong, collaborative culture of school improvement planning is very well embedded.
• The school has not been engaging in school self-evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action; evidence of previous engagement demonstrates very good consultation at whole-school level.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Pupils with higher ability in Mathematics should be provided with more challenging learning experiences during lessons, including pupil-led mathematical investigations.
• Ba chóir an tréimhse chumarsáide a chur i bhfeidhm le linn an teagaisce a ngach rang chun cabhrú le scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. The communicative phase should be implemented during teaching in every class to help develop the pupils’ communication skills.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
   - The quality of school leadership and management is very good. The work of the board of management is very effective. Teaching and learning are central to the board’s discussions. The board actively supports and promotes teachers’ continuing professional development.
   - The principal demonstrates very good leadership and management skills and espouses a clear vision for ongoing school improvement. The ISM team shares this vision and works collaboratively in a highly committed manner towards its achievement, making purposeful and well-informed efforts to meet the needs of pupils.
   - The principal and ISM team promote a culture of collaborate review with regard to many teaching and learning practices, as part of an effective professional accountability process. They have developed a mentoring programme both to support teachers in new roles and to develop the leadership capacity of teachers.
   - Home-school communication is very good. The board and principal provide very good support to the parents’ association to help it fulfil its partnership and advisory role. Procedures are in place that enable open dialogue with parents including their involvement in policy development. Workshops have been provided for parents with regard to aspects of pupils’ learning and well-being. In the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school is well run and that they feel welcome in the school.
   - During the evaluation, very effective management of pupils was observed. In the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that discipline is good and that their child is well looked after in school, and almost all pupils agreed that they feel safe in school.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION
   - The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is very good overall. A strong, collaborative culture of school improvement planning is very well embedded. The outcomes of continuous reflection, led by the principal and ISM team, in consultation with staff, parents, the board and relevant professionals, inform the identification of areas of teaching and learning that require improvement.
   - The principal and ISM team exercise their role in leading and managing action planning for improvement very competently. They have developed systematic procedures to ensure that improvement plans are implemented consistently on a whole-school basis. They provide opportunities for teachers to discuss the implementation of actions and to monitor progression in pupils’ learning.
   - The quality of whole-school curriculum plans and teachers’ planning is good overall. The majority of whole-school curriculum plans examined were of very good quality. The whole-school plan for Irish did not include sufficient differentiated strategies to support the language needs of pupils and the whole-school plan for History did not include reference to content within relevant strands. Further delineation of content in these plans is advised. Most teachers’ short-term planning lacked sufficient focus with regard to meeting the needs of more-able pupils in Mathematics. Teachers should include more specific differentiation of strategies and approaches in their planning to cater for these pupils.
   - The school has not been engaging in SSE due to industrial action. A review of work previously undertaken demonstrates very good consultation at whole-school level. There is evidence that previously agreed targets and actions are having a very effective impact on pupils’ writing attainments in English and their use of problem-solving strategies in Mathematics. The long-established process of reflective practice has evolved significantly in recent years and is a praiseworthy feature of the work of the school.
3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The quality of learning and pupil achievement is good overall. The pupils are provided with opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner; they demonstrated clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities during group work. The majority of pupils demonstrated a good ability to understand and explain the purpose of their learning tasks.

- The quality of teaching is of a good standard, with exemplary teaching observed in a significant minority of classrooms. All teachers present their classroom environments attractively with a broad range of visual supports to enhance pupils’ learning. In Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that teaching is good in the school and almost all pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning.

- The quality of assessment is good. A wide range of assessment procedures is used in a broad range of curricular areas. Teachers have developed some summative and formative assessments records collectively; these are used very well to inform teaching and learning, particularly in English writing. In a few settings, teachers use assessment strategies successfully to ascertain the quality of pupils’ oral language competencies in Irish. This very good practice should be implemented by all teachers. The whole-school plan for assessment should be developed to further support continuity and progression in teachers’ use of summative and formative assessment strategies.

- Teaching and learning in English are very good. Teachers’ collective emphasis on writing genres and comprehension strategies and their commitment to developing pupils’ engagement in the writing process are highly commendable. Pupils’ oral language competencies, including their receptive and expressive skills, are very well developed. Pupils engage in a wide repertoire of learning experiences in poetry, including recitation, competently and with enthusiasm. Pupils’ reading abilities are developed very successfully through access to in-class interventions, well-stocked libraries, games and literacy materials. Teachers teach spelling in the context of reading and writing and they provide pupils with appropriately differentiated programmes of work in this area.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. The teachers integrate the four language skills in lessons effectively. They give a specific vocabulary input based on the lesson themes. Pupils can formulate questions and answer them, sing songs and recite poems with enthusiasm. In the majority of classes, pupils demonstrate commendable interest and participation during lessons. There is scope to broaden the pupils’ communication and comprehension skills through the provision of regular opportunities for them to express and discuss opinions in groups. The communicative phase should be implemented consistently during teaching in every class to provide pupils with the opportunity to practise their communication skills.

- Teaching and the provision of learning experiences in Mathematics are good with evidence of significant improvement in the attainments of pupils in recent years. The whole-school emphasis on the appropriate use of problem-solving strategies and mathematical language is impacting positively on learning outcomes. Classroom environments promote Mathematics and celebrate pupils’ achievements. During the evaluation, pupils’ suggestions were valued
and they agreed or disagreed with mathematical ideas confidently. In the majority of lessons observed, the teachers supported the learning of pupils who experience difficulty with Mathematics very effectively but there was a lack of differentiated learning activities for pupils of higher mathematical ability. More challenging learning experiences during lessons, including pupil-led mathematical investigations should be provided for the more able pupils in Mathematics.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History are very good. Teachers promote pupils’ appreciation of History through the use of time-lines and displays of the local area. All teachers prepared gainful, active learning activities during lessons with many opportunities for pupils to work as historians, both independently and collaboratively. Pupils demonstrated very good skills related to working as a historian using artefacts, evidence and information and communications technology (ICT). They displayed very high levels of awareness of time and chronology and change and continuity. Overall, there is very good progression and development in the programme taught.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. All support teachers have undertaken post-graduate professional development in the area of SEN. They have adopted very successful strategies to share their expertise with other teachers.
- Teachers in all SEN settings undertake planning of a highly commendable quality and careful preparation for lessons resulting in very good levels of pupil engagement in learning. Support teaching is delivered in a variety of modes including team teaching, station teaching, in-class support and withdrawal of small groups of pupils.
- The Continuum of Support is implemented in a systematic manner. The development of support plans is very well informed by assessment data, pupils’ opinions, information from teachers, parents and recommendations from external professionals. Almost all targets outlined in support plans were clear and specific providing for the ready monitoring of pupils’ attainment.
- The school has established clear principles of inclusion and is committed to delivering equality of opportunity for pupils through all aspects of school life. Pupils’ holistic development is fostered very effectively through the provision of a very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities.
- Building on the existing democratic culture that exists within the school, the establishment of a pupil council would further enhance the facilitation of pupil leadership.
- The quality of care for pupils’ well-being is a very significant strength. Through the work of the deputy principal, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, concerns regarding individual pupils’ overall well-being are identified and addressed. A broad range of strategies is in place to promote pupils’ social and emotional well-being, including healthy eating, chess and physical fitness. The school has made very good links with pre-schools and the local post-primary school to support pupils in making effective transitions.
- 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 Schools.
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 St. Clare’s National School welcomes this very positive WSE report. It is pleased that the report acknowledges the high standards that exist in the school, the very high quality of management and leadership in the school and especially the very high quality of support provided by the school for all its pupils’ learning and well-being.

The board is pleased that the efforts of staff in achieving post-graduate qualification was recognised and this is something we will continue to facilitate and encourage.

The board also wishes to acknowledge the very high level of support for the school in the community as evidenced in the extremely positive responses in parent questionnaires. The report acknowledges the very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities for pupils. In this regard, the board is appreciative of the exceptional facilities at the school developed with the support of our parents and wider community. These include the all-weather playground, the school garden and the significant investment in ICT. The board is committed to continue with this positive inclusive partnership, with the development of an outdoor table tennis arena and a basketball area currently underway, to be completed in February 2018.

The school staff and management will use the report to inform the school planning process and the recommendations therein will be used to inform the continuing cycle of SSE using the existing school planning instruments.

The report acknowledges that the school is under Catholic patronage. The board views the school’s patronage and associated ethos as being very clearly reflected in the clear principals of inclusion that are reflected in all aspects of the school’s practice and policy. The report also recognises the high level of commitment in the school which is reflected in the school and staff’s participation in a wide range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activity which include Droichead, Cross Border and European Erasmus projects.

The positivity of the WSE report will be used by the school management as a recognition and encouragement for the promotion of high standards across all subject areas, the promotion of strong partnerships and the continuing support for fully inclusive policy and practice.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

1. The updating of our whole-school policy in Gaeilge to include provision for ‘tréimse cumarsáide’ in all lessons.
2. The implementation of additional challenging mathematics activities in all lessons for pupils with higher ability. The school’s ‘Chess for Learning’ programme will continue to provide both a challenge for those with exceptional ability and simultaneously providing a social outlet for many high-achieving pupils.
3. The board and ISM team will continue to develop and promote the existing exemplary teaching throughout the school by continued support for professional development and through the provision of mentoring support for new staff members.
4. Our school policy in History will be reviewed and updated to include reference to specific content within the relevant strand units for each individual class group.
5. The election of a student council annually will be introduced from this year.
6. The school’s policy on assessment is currently under review and will be completed by October 2018 once the implications of the new allocation model are clear.
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 of the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>