

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Oliver Plunkett National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Grove Road Malahide County Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17914S

Date of inspection: 04-12-2019



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 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, Well-being).
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	04-12-2019
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

Saint Oliver Plunkett National School is a co-educational school for pupils from junior infants to sixth class under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The staff comprises one administrative principal, one administrative deputy principal, thirty-five mainstream teaching positions, twelve special education positions, one part-time special education position and two special class posts for pupils with specific learning difficulties (SLD). School management reports that for accommodation reasons it has deployed thirty-two teachers to mainstream teaching positions and sixteen teachers to special education positions. There are 920 pupils enrolled in the school and their attendance levels are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good with very good learning outcomes evident in a number of observed lessons across a range of curriculum areas including Physical Education, Visual Arts, Drama, Mathematics, Music and Social, Personal and Health Education.
- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil, le réimsí áirithe le feabhsú, ina measc cumas na ndaltaí chun abairtí a chruthú go neamhspleách sa labhairt agus sa scríbeoireacht agus conas a dhéanann na múinteoirí measúnú ar an fhoghlaim. *The quality of learning in Irish is satisfactory with aspects for improvement including pupils' ability to structure sentences independently in both speaking and writing and in how teachers assess learning.*
- The quality of teaching is good; in all observed lessons, teachers demonstrated the capacity to deliver appropriately-structured and well-paced lessons, skilfully utilising a range of approaches to stimulate and maintain pupil engagement.
- The overall quality of special educational needs (SEN) provision is satisfactory with improvement required in certain key areas; these areas include the precise identification of priority learning needs across the learning continuum, the deployment of support according to the greatest level of need, and the setting of specific targets in individual education plans (IEPs) to facilitate the monitoring and recording of pupils' progress.
- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being and the quality of leadership and management are very good; the principal and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the holistic development of pupils.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is good; while the priorities identified in the SSE plan are commendable, the current cycle of SSE would benefit from review in order to align the SSE process with key curriculum priorities including the implementation of the *Primary Language Curriculum*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Is gá cumas na ndaltaí chun abairtí a chruthú go neamhspleách sa labhairt agus sa scríbhneoireacht sa Ghaeilge a fheabhsú agus conas a dhéanann na múinteoirí measúnú ar an fhoghlaim. *Improvement is required in pupils' capacity to structure sentences independently in both speaking and writing and in how teachers assess learning.*
- Improvement in SEN provision is required in certain key areas including the more precise identification of pupils' needs at all stages on the continuum of support, the focusing of all allocated support hours on the pupils with greatest level of need and the setting of more precise targets in individual education plans (IEPs) and in group plans to facilitate monitoring, progression and the recording of learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good with very good learning outcomes evident in a number of observed lessons across a range of curriculum areas including Physical Education, Visual Arts, Drama, Mathematics, Music and Social, Personal and Health Education. Standardised test results in English reading and Mathematics indicate that pupils are achieving very well.
- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil, le réimsí áirithe le feabhsú, ina measc cumas na ndaltaí chun abairtí a chruthú go neamhspleách sa labhairt agus sa scríbhneoireacht i ngach rang agus conas a dhéanann na múinteoirí measúnú ar an fhoghlaim. *The quality of learning in Irish is satisfactory with aspects for improvement, including pupils' ability to structure sentences independently in both speaking and writing in each class and in how teachers assess learning.*
- The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs in the observed lessons was generally good, particularly where pupils were withdrawn for support and where in-class, group- focused instruction took place. However, in many instances, this good learning could not be contextualised in terms of pupils' progress because SEN teacher planning lacked specific targets for pupils and there were varying levels of effectiveness in maintaining notes on pupils' progress. The quality of learning in the observed SLD setting was very good.
- Overall the quality of pupils' learning experiences is good. Pupils enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners; further emphasis on an enquiry-based approach to Mathematics lessons will enhance the very good learning outcomes being achieved in Mathematics. To enhance pupils' learning further in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education, topics to be studied could be shared with pupils in advance, thereby enriching teachers' current approach to establishing prior learning, stimulating pupils' engagement in the topic and facilitating pupils' own research skills. Similarly, the use of copybooks for recording pupils' written work could be expanded to a broader-based format such as a scrapbook, or e-portfolio which would facilitate pupils in adding their own learning to their classroom-directed learning. The school's commitment to local projects is particularly noteworthy.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good. In all observed lessons teachers demonstrated the capacity to deliver appropriately-structured and well-paced lessons skilfully utilising a range of approaches to stimulate and maintain pupil engagement. Teachers were generally very effective in modelling enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning. In a majority of instances, teacher questioning was very skilful in prompting, scaffolding and extending pupil thinking and discussion. All teachers should seek to develop this skill, particularly in discussion-based lessons so that learning is enhanced for pupils by being made more explicit through the categorisation, summary and synthesis of individual pupils' contribution to discussion. The grouping of pupils by ability at some class levels for the delivery of all aspects of the curriculum in Mathematics does not align with recommended practice and should be reviewed. Effective group-focused instruction was observed in a number of lessons in English; impact on pupils' learning would be enhanced by teachers taking observational notes of pupils' learning during lessons and sharing these with pupils.

- The quality of assessment is good. While all teachers visited maintain a record of pupils' progress which contains useful information, there is potential to provide pupils with more detailed feedback on their written work and to ensure that pupils continue to engage with this feedback in their subsequent work. There is also further potential to develop pupils' capacity to reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning.
- Teachers actively engage in collaborative planning and are interested in learning from and contributing to peer-reflection, discussion and planning. In a questionnaire completed by teachers as part of the evaluation, almost all teachers agree that teachers collaborate well and share good practice with each other. Notwithstanding this positive disposition, provision for the implementation of the new *Primary Language Curriculum* from junior infants to second class should be further advanced and better embedded in all classroom provision; school management should address this as a matter of priority and also identify the most effective approach to beginning the implementation of the *Primary Language Curriculum* from third to sixth class.
- SEN teaching is provided in a range of settings from in-class to group and individual withdrawal. All observed support teaching was affirming of pupils and interactions were very positive. There were observed examples of very good practice in both the support and the withdrawal setting. The quality of teaching in the observed SLD setting was very good. However, the overall quality of SEN provision is satisfactory as improvement is required in certain key areas. These areas include the more precise identification of pupils' needs at all stages on the continuum of support; the focusing of support on the pupils with greatest level of need; the setting of more precise targets to facilitate monitoring and progression of learning and the recording of progress. Some observed in-class support provision involved the class and support teachers sharing class teaching duties; this is not the best use of support teachers. In-class support provision should involve targeted teaching which is focused on meeting the identified priority learning needs of the pupils with SEN. Similarly, the partial deployment of a SEN teacher to teach aspects of Music across mainstream classrooms is not the best use of a support teacher and this practice should cease.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. The principal and staff foster a genuine commitment to the holistic development of pupils. A happy, orderly, inclusive learning environment permeates the school. Very respectful interactions between teachers and pupils and pupils and their peers were evident. In questionnaire responses, almost all parents agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and almost all pupils indicated that they like the school.
- At whole-school level, many aspects of provision make an important contribution to the well-being of pupils. These include links with external agencies and the incorporation of the promotion of resilience in the school improvement plan. Teachers have participated in training programmes to support pupils' emotional well-being and resilience. In questionnaire responses, almost all teachers agreed that teachers are encouraged to avail of professional development opportunities. Commendably, the school values pupils' opinions and they are included in the decision-making process through the democratically elected pupil council. However, there is scope for its presence to be expanded throughout the school. Pupil leadership is also encouraged among senior pupils through their participation in the break time buddy system.

- The majority of parents agree that they have been informed about details of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy. While the school provides guidance around RSE during their general meetings with parents at the beginning of the school-year, this guidance should be revisited by school management to ensure that all parents know that the programme being implemented by the school is implemented for RSE purposes.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. School leadership, together with the cooperation of teaching staff, has skilfully managed the challenge of establishing an orderly and secure learning environment for pupils in the midst of a major building project while continuing to provide for a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences during this time. School leadership encourages and facilitates professional collaboration and development for teachers through continuing professional development activities and in supporting teachers to share their learning. School leadership has been very effective in fostering and maintaining positive relationships with parents. School management reports being proactive in establishing channels of communication with local pre-schools and post-primary schools with a focus on creating smooth transitions for pupils.
- The in-school management team demonstrates a good collective understanding of its role in leading teaching and learning; there is potential, however, for members of the in-school management team with responsibility for curriculum areas to develop their leadership role in monitoring the quality of provision in that curriculum area. Reviewing the monthly progress reports submitted by teachers would be a useful starting point for this monitoring.
- For accommodation reasons, school management has not deployed its mainstream and support teacher provision according to its allocation from the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The board should review its deployment of its teacher allocation by the DES as the new school building is completed.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school self-evaluation is good. The school has prioritised resilience and the creation of professional learning communities among teachers as key areas for development for the current school-year. In terms of resilience school leadership has mapped out a worthwhile action plan with concrete actions identified on a monthly basis. Desired outcomes are appropriately identified in terms of impact on specified behaviours; to optimise feasibility and impact, it is necessary for teachers to identify and track cohorts of targeted pupils with regard to certain outcomes. School leadership's actions to develop professional learning communities among teachers would be enhanced by incorporating actions to embed the *Primary Language Curriculum* from junior infants to second class and introduce the *Primary Language Curriculum* from third class to sixth class.

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 Oliver Plunkett School welcomes the positive report that we have received following our recent WSE MLL Inspection.

We extend our gratitude to our teachers whose continued work and efforts were affirmed. We are pleased that the report highlights the very good quality of support for pupils' well-being, as this is something that St. Oliver Plunkett School values very highly.

The stakeholders are particularly delighted to read that *'a happy, orderly, inclusive learning environment permeates the school'* We are grateful to all of our school community *as it was recognised and noted that "Very respectful interactions between teachers and pupils and pupils and their peers were evident."*

In relation to Teaching and Learning, the Board is particularly delighted to read that *'Pupils enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners,'* and that in *'all observed lessons teachers demonstrated the capacity to deliver appropriately-structured and well-paced lessons skilfully utilising a range of approaches to stimulate and maintain pupil engagement'*

It was gratifying to read that *'The overall quality of pupils' learning is good with very good learning outcomes evident in a number of observed lessons across a range of curriculum areas... Standardised test results in English reading and Mathematics indicate that pupils are achieving very well.'*

The school notes with pride the recognition and affirmation of the very good leadership and management of the school, and of the teachers' commitment to professional development.

Finally, the fact that the spirit of collegiality and professional collaboration was highlighted is warmly welcomed, as this is a priority in our school self-evaluation and improvement plan.

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 and teaching staff acknowledge the recommendations and observations by the Inspectorate that will feed into our ongoing planning process. This work is already well underway and is being addressed through the School Self-Evaluation and School Improvement Planning process.

The report gives the school community great encouragement in striving to achieve the highest of standards in education and is an endorsement of our motto *"Bród asainn féin is as gach a ndéanaimid."*

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;