An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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<th>Aímn na scoile / School name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Cockhill Road Stamullen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18044T</td>
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Date of inspection: 03-04-2019
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(s) 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.
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

**Dates of inspection**
03-04-2019

**Inspection activities undertaken**
- 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

- 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**
St Patrick’s National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath. The staff is comprised of twenty-six mainstream teachers, six full-time and one shared special educational needs teacher, an administrative principal and deputy principal. At the time of the evaluation, there were 664 pupils enrolled in the school. Pupils’ attendance levels are good.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- The overall quality of learning is good; aspects of pupils’ learning, including mastery of scientific and geographic skills and their understanding of a number of key concepts in Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) have not been fully developed.
- The overall quality of teaching is good; the extensive programme of in-class support recently introduced has resulted in an imbalance in the resources being allocated to pupils with complex additional needs, and a number of curricular plans, including SESE and Social Personal and Health Education, (SPHE) are not sufficiently detailed to inform teachers’ individual and collective practice.
- The overall quality of assessment is good; while a praiseworthy emphasis has been placed on developing pupil self-assessment on whole-school basis, there is no whole-school policy on assessment and significant variation exists in teachers’ approaches to assessment and in particular, the provision of formative feedback on pupils’ written work.
- The overall quality of support for pupils’ well-being is very good; the promotion of pupils’ well-being is central to the ethos of the school.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is good; the in-school management team do not meet regularly and there is insufficient emphasis on monitoring the implementation of curricular plans on a systematic, whole-school basis.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good; whole-school improvement initiatives have impacted positively on pupils’ learning.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Teachers should ensure the incremental development of pupils’ skills across the SESE curriculum and review the curricular plans to support continuity in their practice and progression in pupils’ learning.
- A whole-school policy on assessment should be developed and used to extend best practices in relation to assessment approaches across all classes; particular attention should be given to promoting consistent best practice regarding the provision of formative feedback on
pupils’ written work and also to teachers’ use of assessment information to differentiate provision for pupils of varying abilities.

- The arrangements underpinning the in-class support programme to all classes throughout the year should be reviewed to ensure that the deployment of SET teachers is suitably aligned to the needs of the pupils prioritised under the Continuum of Support.
- The leadership team should review the curricular leadership roles to allow for enhanced monitoring of curriculum implementation on a whole-school basis and its impact on pupils’ learning; regular meetings of the in-school management team should be convened to support the leadership and monitoring of learning.
- The board of management and principal, in close consultation with the teaching staff, should clarify the aspects of their recently reviewed SPHE plan that deal with the sensitive aspects of the Relations and Sexuality Education programme: this revised policy should be shared with the parent community.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

- The overall quality of learning is good. Pupils demonstrate a range of positive dispositions towards their learning. In questionnaires completed by the pupils during the evaluation, most pupils expressed that they like the school and view it as a good school. Pupils engaged in purposeful pair work, with highly commendable pair work evident in Irish lessons. Pupils were very confident with digital learning technologies and participated in a wide range of experiences using DLT.
- Play-based learning ranged from good to very good. Play areas using Aistear: The Early Childhood Framework were carefully planned and showed progression. Where best practice was noted, pupils’ thoughts were elicited and developed through rich vocabulary and sustained shared thinking.
- Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy are good. Pupils have experience of a wide variety of novels. Libraries were well-stocked throughout the school. Pupils could also speak about a range of stories and discuss he genres of writing. Good practice in the teaching of genres in some classes could be extended throughout the school. Pupils could recite a range of poems. However, the presentation of written work in a significant number of cases was not satisfactory. In mathematics, pupils engaged with a range of hands-on resources and had a good grasp of mathematical concepts and problem solving. In the lessons observed, pupils participated in active learning and exploration of mathematics in the environment.
- Tá atmaisféar dearfach cothaithe I leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Aithrisíonn na daltaí rainn agus amhráin le fonn agus bri. A very positive atmosphere is promoted in relation to Irish in the school. Pupils recite poetry and songs with enthusiasm and understanding.
- The development of skills in the Arts and Physical Education has been a particular strength of the school with an emphasis on developing pupils’ skills incrementally. Extending this approach to Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) would assist in progressing pupils’ learning. Pupils participated in a wide variety of physical activities and engage in self-assessment. All PE strands are covered comprehensively and pupils were able to talk about their activities with confidence. In Visual Arts, pupils display a high quality of imagination and skill. Pupils demonstrate enjoyment of singing in a variety of genres and many pupils participate in the school choir. Pupils take great pride in performing at assemblies and school events.
2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is commendable. Teachers create a positive learning atmosphere with mutual respect, affirmation and trust. There is an effective balance of teacher and pupil-led learning which provides pupils with many opportunities to fully participate in their learning. Where best practice was noted, pupils were actively involved in pair and group work and reporting their learning to the class.
- Teachers integrate the pupils’ learning very well across the different subjects of the curriculum. Teachers are particularly skilled in questioning with a good range of open-ended questions and questions which connected previous learning. Teachers prepared and used an array of resources with a balance of open ended and authentic resources. Lessons are well paced. In the questionnaire responses almost all pupils reported that their teacher explained things clearly, while almost all parents consider that teaching is good in the school.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is positive and supportive although some possibilities for improvement exist. Team teaching has been established and there is commendable collaboration between the mainstream and special educational needs teachers. The SEN team are very effective in identifying pupils with additional needs and those who would benefit from early intervention. However, currently station teaching is providing the same support across all levels with the priorities being identified by the mainstream teachers. Because of the ambitious and extensive nature of the station teaching being used in all classes, it has reduced the access of pupils to individual support. In a significant number of instances, pupils require additional contact teaching time to address their prioritised needs.
- The overall quality of assessment is effective. Teachers have used assessment information to underpin school self-evaluation. Teachers are using self-assessment learning folders to enhance pupils’ learning. Exemplary practice was noted in some settings where teachers use a range of assessment of learning and assessment for learning strategies to support the learning. In some instances, there is insufficient use of formative assessment in copies to enhance the learning. Highly commendable practice was observed in relation to pre-testing and post-testing of literacy initiatives. In order to capture and enhance the practice in individual classes, a whole-school policy on assessment should be implemented so as to better inform differentiation in short-term planning and maximise continuity and progression in learning.

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

- The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is highly commendable. The promotion of well-being is central to the ethos of the school. Teachers are aware of the importance of relationships and nurturing children’s’ positive sense of identity. Teachers show great sensitivity and are mindful of the issues that challenge pupils in their lives. All teachers understand their shared role in supporting learning for and learning about well-being.
- Pupils are developing very effective leadership roles in a number of committees including the student council, green flag and active school flag committees. Pupil participation is valued by staff and this is evident as pupils lead assemblies and implement initiatives relating to yard activities.
- Staff demonstrates highly commendable commitment to developing and providing targeted supports for pupils experiencing barriers and challenges to well-being and learning. Programmes including Weaving Well-being, mindfulness and social skills development are
implemented to support the development of coping strategies, emotional well-being and strategies to manage anxiety.

- There is a highly commendable emphasis placed on developing positive attitudes towards physical fitness through a variety of sporting activities.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is effective. The board of management carries out its' duties diligently and manages the day to day running of the school very effectively. The board meets regularly and board members are well informed regarding the work of the school. The school has expanded in recent years and this expansion has been well-managed. The school grounds are maintained to a very high standard and the school is very well resourced. The board value and support ongoing professional development of staff.

- The principal and deputy principal foster a positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions within the school community. They carry out their duties professionally and competently. There is systematic monitoring of standardised testing which is effective and they provide a broad curriculum. A number of whole school curricular plans require review to ensure sufficient delineation and to support incremental development to ensure greater clarity from class to class. There is regular communication with the school community through email with a bank of resources available to parents on the school website. The members of the in-school management team (ISM) are deeply committed to their work and undertake a range of duties diligently and effectively. The ISM team manage some aspects of curriculum planning and its’ impact. Post holders require an increased role in the monitoring of curriculum implementation and to identify and address any imbalances across the strands of the curriculum. Regular meetings of the ISM team would support this.

- Effective and regular communications with parents are established. The parents’ association provides very good support to the school. According to the parent questionnaires, almost all parents agree that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that it is warm and welcoming.

- While teaching of the strands relating to the RSE curriculum is recorded in individual teachers’ planning and records, there was a degree of uncertainty regarding RSE practice. The recently reviewed SPHE plan did not delineate the content and while it referred to a separate RSE policy, this was not available during the inspection. It is a priority that a formal RSE policy be formulated and ratified.

- The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council’s Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide 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. School improvement initiatives which included Physical Education have positively impacted on pupils’ learning. The role of assessment in skills development in PE is a particular strength of the school having been developed through the SSE process.

- The SSE process has been used to effectively identify spelling as an area for improvement and work is ongoing to identify specific targets.
• The school has very good capacity for improvement. The commitment demonstrated by teachers to ongoing professional development and sharing of practice will support the school in bringing about improvement.
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 accepts the findings and recommendations of the WSE report. The BOM is pleased that the findings of the report acknowledge that

- The quality of teaching, learning, assessment and leadership and management is good.
- The board is also pleased that the quality of school self-evaluation is very good.
- The acknowledgement that the quality of support for pupils’ well-being is highly commendable is particularly pleasing as the promotion of well-being is central to the ethos of our school.

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

Work has already begun on implementing the key recommendations of the report.

- Our RSE policy has been reviewed with input from parents’ representatives and staff. This policy has been ratified and specifies clearly the programme to be followed. The policy and relevant resource materials have been published on the school website so that parents/guardians are fully aware of the content and timing of the lessons.
- Our in-school management team have already started meeting formally each month and a plan for curricular review will be put in place in September. Regular re-alignment of roles will be necessary unless there is an increase in the number of posts.
- The focus of SSE in 2019/20 will be SESE with emphasis on mastery of scientific and geographical skills.
- A new Assessment Policy is being drawn up and should be ready for ratification by the end of the year.
- The arrangement of the in-class support programme has been reviewed and the deployment of SET teachers has been altered, allowing additional support time for children with complex needs.
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.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard.</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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<td>Good</td>
<td>Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement.</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.</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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<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.</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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<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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