### Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

**REPORT**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Bhrighde</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Faughart</td>
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<td>Mountpleasant</td>
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<td>Dundalk</td>
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<td>County Louth</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18391R</td>
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**Date of Evaluation: 09-03-2017**
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 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 – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>09-03-2017</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Meeting with principal and deputy principal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Observation of teaching and learning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Meeting with parent representatives</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Examination of pupils’ work</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Meeting with teachers</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Interaction with pupils</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Review of relevant documents</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Feedback to senior management team and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</strong></td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Náisiúnta Bhrighde in Faughart, Dundalk, County Louth is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. The school has three mainstream class teachers and is the base school for a learning-support and resource teaching post, shared with another local school. There have been a number of staff changes in recent times. Attendance levels among the fifty-five pupils enrolled are good in general; a minority had relatively high absence patterns during certain months over the past year. In the past few years, enrolment has declined steeply; there was concern expressed by members of the school community that this trend will continue.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS
- The mission statement states that the school will provide education of the highest quality for all pupils in a happy and healthy environment; evidence indicates that this mission is not being realised currently.
- The overall quality of school leadership and management was found to be fair at the time of this evaluation, leadership for learning within the school was not prioritised sufficiently and the oversight role of the board of management was not being discharged satisfactorily.
- Taking into account all teaching observed across the settings of the school, the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall; however, there was significant variation in the quality of teaching in certain subjects ranging from outstanding to poor.
- There is scope for improvement in respect of the overall quality of learning; while there was evidence of very good learning in some settings, particularly in the more junior classes, the quality of learning outcomes and experiences as observed during this evaluation was fair overall at whole-school level.
- The implementation of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework in the infant classes is very good.
- All classrooms presented well and there was good provision of resources.
- The quality of support teaching observed for pupils with additional learning needs was commendable.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The board of management, in consultation with the staff, the wider school community and the patron, should formulate, implement and monitor a strategic plan for the operation and development of the school so that its mission statement can be implemented satisfactorily.
• The oversight role of the board of management needs to be strengthened significantly and within the school, leadership for learning should develop greatly; to that end leadership and coaching supports should be accessed by the principal.
• There is need to develop differentiated teaching approaches, especially class-level differentiation for the multi-class settings of the school, to ensure satisfactory progression in learning.
• There is need to improve the quality of both teaching and learning in core subjects at certain class levels so that there is much better consistency in the quality of learning across the school; assistance should be sought from the support agencies of the Department of Education and Skills.
• The board of management should prepare and implement a continuous professional development (CPD) plan for teachers in order to support teaching improvement in the school at both the individual level and the collective level.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

• At the time of the evaluation, the quality of the overall learning of pupils showed scope to improve. The quality of learning experiences in certain subjects, literacy in particular, ranged from very good in some classrooms to poor in others. In a few subjects, the Arts in particular, there was evidence of better consistency in the quality of learning experience across the three classrooms. The achievement of a consistently high quality of both learning experience and outcome across all subjects of the Primary School Curriculum is required and any gaps in provision should be addressed. While the majority of parents who completed a questionnaire agreed that their child was doing well at school, a significant minority disagreed or were unsure.
• Class-level differentiation of learning was not at an appropriate standard in the school as a whole. Insufficient differentiation of learning was observed, particularly in the more senior classes; this aspect should be targeted for improvement. Evidence from the pupils’ questionnaires corroborates that group-level collaborative learning experiences are not occurring in a sufficiently frequent manner.
• The implementation of Aistear in the infant classes is of a very good standard.
• The results of standardised tests of English reading and of Mathematics over the past few years indicate that standards have exceeded national averages. However, the number of pupils achieving highly on both standardised tests is not as expected. Analysis of the results of the different mathematics strands assessed, on the standardised test of Mathematics, indicates that pupils find problem-solving tasks and measures difficult. There is need to ensure suitable differentiation to respond to pupils’ various abilities and to challenge the most-able pupils more.
• The standard of copybook work in some classrooms was commendable. However, more could be achieved in written work with senior pupils; an over emphasis on workbook exercises was observed. There is need for greater emphasis on creative writing across a range of genres. There should be clear expectations across the school about the type and extent of written work and about its expected quality and standards of presentation. There was insufficient evidence of teacher correction and provision of formative feedback in copybook work for older pupils.
Ghlac na daltaí páirt mhaith sna ceachtanna Gaeilge a breathnaíodh. Léiríonn na daltaí, na daltaí óga go háirithe, go bhfuil ar a gcumas abairtí iomlána a rá. Níl forchéimniú sásúil á bhaint amach i gcaighdeán na Gaeilge labhartha sa scoil ina hiomláine, áfach. D’fhéadfadh an scoil tabhairt faoin mheasúnú a thuilleadh, an Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Rialta (TGD-R), ina measc, a úsáid chun monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar forchéimniú fhoghlaim na ndaltaí.

Pupils engaged well in the Irish lessons observed. Many, in particular the younger pupils, were able to articulate full sentences in the context of the lessons observed. However, satisfactory progression in learning, and particularly in the standard of spoken Irish, is not being achieved across the school as a whole. The school should consider the use of further assessment, including the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Schools (TGD-R), to monitor the progression of pupils’ learning.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

At the time of the evaluation, the overall quality of teaching observed was satisfactory. However, there was significant variation in the quality of teaching in the school as a whole ranging from outstanding to unsatisfactory in certain subjects; such a level of variation in practice is not appropriate. While positive elements were found in each of the three mainstream classrooms for some subject areas, notably in the preparation of high-quality visual resources and in respect of questioning strategies, the pedagogical skills observed during the evaluation were not consistent or satisfactory across all subjects and across all classrooms. There is need to develop consistency in relation to the quality of teaching across each subject in this school, to ensure its effectiveness, and for this to be supported through the implementation of a continuous professional development (CPD) plan for the school.

Effective support is provided to pupils with additional learning needs. The lessons observed were well structured and appropriate to the pupils’ needs. Currently, most of the additional support occurs through the withdrawal of pupils from their mainstream settings. More use of in-class support, through team teaching in the mainstream setting, is required. Evidence of irregular practice was found in respect of the deployment of the learning-support and resource teacher, who should not be deployed to cover for mainstream teachers’ absences.

A whole-school plan is in place. However, the whole-school development planning process requires considerable review and improvement in order for whole-school plans in different curriculum areas to contribute to consistent improvements in educational standards.

The teaching of reading was found to be fair overall; class level differentiation of reading resources and pupils’ reading experience was insufficient. In the context of this school, there is need for schemes of appropriately differentiated levelled readers to be used so as to develop pupils’ reading skills in a consistent manner.

Ní bhaineann comhsheasmhacht sásúil le teagasc na Gaeilge trasna na scoile ina hiomláine.

Cé gur nótáladh cleachtas an-mhaith i gceachtanna ar leith, léiríodh cleachtas a bhí gan a bheith sásúil chomh maith. Moltar béim sa bhreis a char ar an gcóir-athríseoireacht do na daltaí óga agus cumarsáid leathnaithe sa spríocheanga a chinntiú do na daltaí níos sine. Tá gá le cuir chuige struchtúrtha a aontú sa scoil maidir le teagasc na Gaeilge. There is not a satisfactory consistency in the teaching of Irish across the school as a whole. While very good practices were seen in some lessons, unsatisfactory practices were also evident. More emphasis should be placed on choral activity for young pupils and on ensuring extended conversation in the target language for the older pupils. There is need to agree and implement whole-school structured approaches for the teaching of Irish.

All teachers provided written planning for their work; much of this was of a good quality. The differentiation of content and skills for each class level should be clearer in mainstream
teachers’ planning. In the support-teaching setting, targets should be more outcome-focused and time-bound. All classrooms presented well and there was good provision of resources.

- While in some settings appropriate provision for the assessment of learning was made, overall, it should be improved in the school. Limited assessment-for-learning (AfL) strategies were employed across the school at the time of the evaluation. More systematic use of AfL should be planned and implemented. A majority of pupils in questionnaire responses agreed that their teacher explains things clearly, but fewer than half agreed that their teacher talked to them about how to improve their work. More formative feedback should be given to pupils on their work.

3. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS’ WELL-BEING

- Overall, the support for pupils’ well-being, as observed, was adequate. At individual classroom level, interactions observed between teachers and pupils and between pupils and pupils were courteous. However, the mission statement states that the school will provide education of the highest quality for all pupils in a happy and healthy environment; evidence indicates that this mission is not being realised currently. Members of the school community expressed concern regarding a lack of consistency in provision for pupils in the school and, in light of falling enrolment, the need for greater stability.
- Most pupils who completed a questionnaire agreed that their school is a good school. However, fewer than half agreed that behaviour was good in their class.
- Almost all parents who completed a questionnaire agreed that their child feels safe and well looked after in school and enjoys school. Almost all of the pupils agreed that they like school and feel safe in the playground and all agreed that they felt safe in class. Fewer than half of them agreed they had a say in how things are done in the school; school management should explore ways to address this. Most pupils agreed that if they experienced bullying they could get help from a teacher or adult in the school. A majority of parents agreed that the school would act swiftly if their child experienced bullying; a few were unsure. Further communication with parents in relation to the school’s anti-bullying policy and practice would be worthwhile.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management observed during this evaluation was fair overall. There are a number of areas that require prompt attention in order for the school to develop as it should.
- The board of management meets at suitable, regular intervals. Agendas of meetings and minutes of previous meetings should be distributed to members well in advance of meetings and more consistency of detail in the recording of minutes is recommended. The board’s representatives reported satisfaction with how the school’s finances are managed and that accounts are certified annually. Board members also expressed a strong desire for school improvement and spoke of the need to increase enrolment. Currently, the board is experiencing difficulty in discharging some of its duties. Its oversight function should be strengthened. It is strongly recommended that the board adopt an ongoing role in discussing standards of learning at its meetings and strengthen its oversight role across all areas of relevant school functioning. The board, in consultation with the staff and wider school community, should formulate, implement and monitor a strategic plan for the operation and development of the school. It should develop a CPD plan for teachers’ individual and
collective practice. A stronger role for the board is recommended in reviewing and ratifying whole-school school plans in the different subject areas. Training for all board members is strongly advocated.

- Half of the parents who completed a questionnaire agreed the school is run well. However, a significant minority disagreed, while others were not sure. A significant minority disagreed that the school regularly seeks the views of parents.
- Board and parent representatives reported significant concerns about aspects of school leadership, the overall quality of education being provided to the pupils in various subjects, and the limited involvement in co-curricular provision. Action should be taken as a matter of priority to rebuild trust within the school community and to improve enrolment; mediation might be considered as one means to help the school to do this.
- The in-school management team comprises a principal and deputy principal. The principal is aware of the need to improve provision in the school. In discussion, he expressed a strong desire for better school stability, and improved provision for pupils’ learning and enrolment. Currently, leadership for learning is not prioritised sufficiently within the school; this needs to be addressed. There is need to develop a shared strategic vision in order to ensure school stability and improve leadership for learning. In preparing to lead the necessary changes at school level, it is strongly recommended that the principal access relevant leadership training, coaching and support. The newly-appointed deputy principal attends to her current duties in a dedicated and very capable manner. Going forward, the principal and deputy principal, working in partnership, should address limitations in whole-school curricular planning and other areas, broadly related to both assessment and communication, in a systematic and purposeful manner. To support this, each curricular plan should articulate the standards of expected learning for each class level, in terms of both content and skills. An action plan to guide this activity should be developed as the first step of this process.
- 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.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has engaged previously in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process but is not engaging in process currently due to industrial action. Two school improvement plans have been prepared to date. Going forward, improved whole-school and individual teacher reflective action, up to and including peer-observation of teaching, should be considered as means to support the process. The school should seek further guidance from the relevant support agencies in relation to developing its SSE work.

Conclusion

The school’s potential to undertake school improvement is limited by a number of factors at the current time, relating to weaknesses in aspects of school leadership and inconsistency of provision for pupils. It is strongly advised that the school develop action plans for improvement in respect of each of the recommendations of this report and to seek guidance, as appropriate, from the Department’s support agencies. In addition, there is need for a more robust oversight role by the board of management and improved leadership for learning within the school. There is need to
improve communication with the wider school community and to involve parents more purposefully in the future development of the school.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Having discussed and accepted the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Report, the Board are working to develop an Action Plan to address the concerns and implement recommendations. Once that has been finalised, it will be shared with the whole school community.

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

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Good</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Fair</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Weak</strong></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>
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