

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Ainm na scoile /<br/>School name</b>       | Scoil Náisiúnta Beal Atha Grean |
| <b>Seoladh na scoile /<br/>School address</b> | Kilmallock<br>Co Limerick       |
| <b>Uimhir rolla /<br/>Roll number</b>         | 19323F                          |

**Date of inspection: 07-11-2018**



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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 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.

## **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, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 of the above. Although the name of the DLP was displayed at the entrance to the school, the Child Safeguarding Statement and risk assessment were not. This was addressed by the school immediately and the Safeguarding Statement and risk assessment were displayed accordingly.

## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

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| <b>Dates of inspection</b>   | 07-11-2018   |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li><li>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Meeting with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent and pupil and questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</li></ul> |

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Béal Átha Grean is a coeducational, primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. The staff consists of four mainstream class teachers and four teachers who support pupils with special educational needs, one of whom is shared with a neighbouring school. Seomra Bhríd is a special class which supports pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). At the time of the evaluation, there were ninety-five pupils enrolled in the school. Pupil attendance levels are good.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning is good and pupils are facilitated to engage actively in their lessons; a whole-school approach to genre writing would assist in the development of pupils' writing skills.
- The quality of teaching is good with high levels of teacher collaboration being a commendable feature of school practice.
- The quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs is good; an increased focus on curricular targets would further enhance the very good practice observed in Seomra Bhríd.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school.
- The quality of leadership and management is good, yet some areas for improvement exist.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is good generally but its impact should be more closely monitored and reviewed.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach to genre writing should be implemented.
- In Seomra Bhríd, curricular targets for pupils should be informed by assessment data and align more closely with classroom practice.
- The board should review the enrolment policy of the school, ensure school accounts are certified annually and further develop mechanisms which involve parents in policy formation and review.
- To support the board to monitor and review the impact of SSE and associated interventions on learner outcomes, the school should report to it regularly on the progression of SSE; the legislative and policy checklist should also be completed annually.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of learning is good. Pupils demonstrate appropriate knowledge of prior learning. They are facilitated to develop cross-curricular skills through a range of active methodologies and project work. Information and communication technologies are used effectively and the school was recently designated as a Digital School of Distinction. In questionnaires completed during the evaluation, a majority of pupils responded that they enjoyed their lessons and liked school.
- Attainment in literacy is good. In junior classes, pupils' oral language skills are progressed through the effective implementation of the *Primary Language Curriculum (PLC)*. Themes advanced through approaches to *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* enhance pupils' learning. In all settings, subject related language was taught explicitly in a range of lessons and pupils were enabled to use this language purposefully in learning activities. Pupils are facilitated to engage in free and creative writing activities. Consideration should be given to the development of a whole-school approach to genre writing and extending the opportunities provided to pupils to use these skills in a variety of subjects.
- Tá atmaisféar dearfach cothaithe i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Aithrisíonn na daltaí rainn agus amhráin le fonn agus brí. Tá deiseanna cothaithe dóibh an Ghaeilge a úsáid in ábhair eile agus tá cumas maith acu sa teanga go ginearálta. Is gá, ámh a chinntiú go ndéantar dul chun cinn céimniúil ina scileanna teanga ó rang go rang. *A positive atmosphere is promoted in relation to Irish in the school. Pupils recite poetry and songs with enthusiasm and understanding. They have opportunities to use Irish in other subjects and have good ability in the language generally. There is a need, however, to ensure that pupils' language skills are developed systematically from class to class.*
- Pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. A majority of pupils demonstrate appropriate to good understanding of skills and concepts across mathematical strands. In one setting, differentiated group work was used very effectively to consolidate pupils' learning in number and measures. Pupils were enabled to discuss mathematical processes as they worked collaboratively to complete learning tasks. Extending this approach could assist in progressing pupils' learning, particularly in areas of identified need.
- In general, pupils with special educational needs are making progress commensurate with their ability.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching and assessment in mainstream and support settings is good generally, with very good practice noted in some lessons.
- Teachers are hardworking and committed to the holistic development of the pupils in their care. They work together effectively as a team, with high levels of collaboration being a commendable feature of practice. Teachers demonstrate very good classroom management skills. They employ a range of methodologies effectively. All teachers plan consistently. Where very good practice was noted, planning and learning activities were differentiated for pupils of varying ability. The acquisition of skills and knowledge were addressed in lesson content and the attainment of learning objectives was assessed through cross-curricular checklists. Sharing the success criteria of lessons with pupils would enhance the existing self-assessment strategies promoted in the school.

- The quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs is good overall. Aspects of very good practice were noted in Seomra Bhríd.
- *The Continuum of Support* is implemented consistently. Individual support files are created for pupils in receipt of support in consultation with parents and teachers. In a majority of settings, targets are stated clearly and informed by assessment data. The school is commended for introducing team-teaching approaches to progress pupil attainment in literacy and numeracy. The impact of these interventions is closely monitored and evaluated. However, there is a need to ensure that the allocation of support prioritises pupils with the greatest level of need. Where pupils are withdrawn, support should be supplementary to instruction in mainstream classes and not provided during lessons in which they have an identified need.
- In Seomra Bhríd, information was presented to pupils in a clear, structured and predictable manner. A combination of play and structured physical activity was used to very good effect. There is evidence of very successful integration of pupils into mainstream classes. However, target setting for curricular areas should align more closely with available assessment data and with the work being undertaken in the classroom.
- In questionnaires completed during the evaluation, almost all parents responded that teaching was good in the school.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school.
- Positive learning environments were a notable feature of practice during the evaluation. Pupils are well behaved and demonstrate a clear understanding of classroom rules.
- Programmes which support pupils' well-being are implemented consistently. A transition programme is completed with senior pupils to prepare them for secondary school.
- Green Schools' and Active School committees provide pupils with the opportunity to participate in school decisions. Pupils' work and achievements are celebrated in weekly assemblies. Responses to questionnaires indicate that there may be scope to further develop pupil voice in school life.
- Almost all parents who completed questionnaires responded that the school helps their child's personal and social development.

### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The board of management is very supportive of the school. Regular meetings are convened and financial statements are presented at each meeting. However, in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act (1998), school accounts should be certified annually. The board communicates with the broader school community in an open and transparent manner. The enrolment policy should be reviewed to reflect the inclusive culture which is successfully promoted by the school.
- The principal responds proactively to the changing needs of the school. He encourages teamwork in all aspects of school life and empowers teachers to be innovative in their practice. The deputy principal was recently appointed to her role and an assistant principal post has yet to be filled. The in-school leadership team should report annually to the board on their duties.
- The school facilitates and supports the parents' association to fulfil its partnership and advisory role. The further development of mechanisms to involve parents in policy formation and review is advised.

- The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards of 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 SSE is good. School improvement plans which targeted whole-school approaches to handwriting and problem-solving have impacted positively on teachers' practice and learner experiences. Currently, the school is gathering evidence to introduce initiatives that will address reading fluency and comprehension. To support the board to monitor and review the impact of SSE and associated interventions on learner outcomes, the school should report to it regularly on the progression of SSE. The legislative and policy checklist should also be completed annually.

## 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  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Very Good</b>    | <b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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 |
| <b>Good</b>         | <b>Good</b> 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 <b>very good</b> standard.                             | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement   |
| <b>Satisfactory</b> | <b>Satisfactory</b> 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  |
| <b>Fair</b>         | <b>Fair</b> 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   |
| <b>Weak</b>         | <b>Weak</b> 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;   |

# **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 Ballyagran NS welcomes this positive Whole-School Evaluation, Management, Leadership and Learning Report (WSE-MLL). The board is delighted with the findings regarding the high quality of pupils' well-being and the overall quality of teaching which was acknowledged as being of a high standard. The board is also pleased that the report acknowledges the work of staff in implementing a wide range of teaching methodologies throughout the age groups and how the school has embraced best practice around in-class intervention practices, SET and special class provision.

### **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 leadership and management of Ballyagran NS will continue to place a strong focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment. The energy, teamwork and application to improving standards, shown by staff, will be a feature of the implementation of this report's recommendations. The recommendations are currently being addressed as part of the overall plan of school work. Giving due consideration to the time necessary to progress the building project currently underway, the board will endeavor to ensure that the recommendations are implemented in a staged approach.