

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	St Oliver Plunkett Ns
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Blackcastle Navan Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19476H

Date of inspection: 30-01-2020



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 History.

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 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.

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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-School Evaluation

Date of inspection	30-01-2020
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal, in-school management team (ISM) and special education teachers (SETs)• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Review of relevant documents <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Interaction with pupils and examination of their work• Feedback meetings with teachers• Post-inspection feedback meeting with staff and board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Oliver Plunkett National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school participates in Band 2 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), a programme of the Department of Education and Skills to alleviate educational disadvantage. As part of its participation in DEIS, the school has the services of a home-school-community liaison teacher (HSCL) and a project worker employed under the School Completion Programme (SCP). The staff consists of an acting administrative principal, seventeen mainstream teachers, seven full-time special education teachers (SET) and access to an additional SET on a part-time basis. There are currently 440 pupils enrolled. Pupil attendance is monitored vigilantly.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of school leadership and management is very good; the acting principal and acting deputy principal work very closely together and foster collaborative and reflective practices among staff.
- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is very good.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good; while pupils demonstrate very good learning outcomes in Irish, English and Mathematics, pupils' skills in History are underdeveloped.
- The quality of assessment is good overall with examples of very good assessment practices, including pupil assessment practice, which have not yet been developed on a whole-school basis.
- The quality of support for pupils is good overall; however, aspects of co-ordination lack cohesiveness, the use of classroom support plans is not fully realised and the whole-school plan for special education requires review.
- An inclusive and enabling culture has been effectively nurtured that facilitates pupils' holistic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach to pupils' self-assessment should be developed to enhance pupils' autonomy and effectiveness as learners.
- Teachers should place a greater emphasis on developing pupils' skills as historians.
- In order to ensure consistency and greater cohesiveness in the implementation of the Continuum of Support in both mainstream and support settings, the whole-school plan for

special educational needs (SEN) should be updated and classroom support plans should be further developed to support teachers' practice and pupils' learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management carries out its duties in a diligent manner and with commendable attention to meeting the diverse needs of pupils, particularly those who may encounter challenge or disadvantage. The board provides considerable support for teachers' ongoing professional development.
- The acting principal demonstrates very good organisational and leadership skills. She nurtures positive relationships with stakeholders. She is actively involved in a range of curricular initiatives and is a regular visible presence to parents and pupils. She is ably supported by an acting deputy principal who undertakes curricular leadership and management responsibilities in a very effective manner. They have worked in close collaboration to manage a number of changes very successfully.
- The in-school management team undertakes the assigned duties diligently. Post-holders collaborate with staff to provide many valuable curricular and co-curricular learning experiences. The duties of the SEN co-ordinator are currently shared by the SETs and the school principal. Further consideration should now be given to a review of the range of duties assigned to post-holders to ensure they are closely aligned with the emerging priorities of the school.
- In questionnaires conducted during the evaluation, almost all parents reported that they are happy with how the school is run. Parents have regular opportunities to be actively involved in aspects of school life including an award-winning school garden. An active Parents' Association contributes to the work of the school and the involvement of parents.
- Pupils are given opportunities to express their opinions and leadership skills through a range of initiatives including representation on a variety of school committees and participation in the daily announcements on the intercom system. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation, almost all pupils are very positive regarding how safe they feel in school.
- The school provides placement experience for teachers in initial teacher training. Strong links with teacher education institutions have been established reflecting the learning culture of the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school planning is very good overall. Targets delineated in the DEIS plan across each of the six themes are specific and provide an appropriate focus for the implementation and review of improvement initiatives. The action plans for improvement have impacted positively on teachers' practice and on pupils' educational experiences.

- Teachers have worked collaboratively to review whole-school curricular plans in order to embed the new Primary Language Curriculum (PLC). Short-term planning templates have been developed to support teachers in the implementation of the PLC. The curricular plans for English, Irish, Mathematics and History provide clear guidance to teachers, illustrating an incremental development in content from class to class.
- Significant investment has been made in promoting the use of technology and pupils have created their own content through videos and podcasts. School leaders articulate clearly their plans to embed technology in teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences through further engagement with the Digital Framework for Learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Pupils enjoy a wide range of learning experiences and demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of what they have been taught. In almost all the lessons observed, pupils were highly engaged and demonstrated very good learning outcomes. Pupils are enabled to work both independently and collaboratively.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers prepare very conscientiously for pupils and provide a broad range of enriching learning experiences. Teaching is characterised by good lesson structure and pacing. A highly commendable emphasis is placed on pupil conversations and active learning. Teachers make very purposeful use of incidental learning opportunities and provide timely constructive feedback to enable pupils to progress. Teachers are skilled in eliciting pupils' knowledge and understanding of previous learning and facilitate good consolidation of lesson content. Teachers' individual practice consistently reflects whole-school priorities including high expectations for pupils' achievement and an emphasis on extending pupils' understanding and use of language across all curricular areas.
- The quality of assessment is good. Teachers monitor pupils' work in a constructive manner. Standardised assessment data are analysed to identify pupils in need of additional supports. It was noted that pupils' self-assessment is facilitated very effectively in a small number of instances and these practices should now be extended on a whole-school basis to enhance pupils' autonomy and effectiveness as learners. Diagnostic assessments are currently under-utilised to inform teaching and learning. The use of diagnostic testing should be enhanced to refine the improvement targets in student support plans and ensure that these closely align to pupils' prioritised learning needs.
- Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement in English is very good overall. A whole-school emphasis on oral language has impacted positively on pupils' learning. Pupils recite an extensive variety of rhymes and poetry. Novels and stories are used very successfully to foster positive attitudes towards reading. A wide range of successful interventions to support literacy is in place including in-class interventions that involve the use of differentiated reading material. The whole-school improvement plan to develop comprehension strategies is very evident in teachers' practice and pupils' learning. A systematic approach to developing the genres of writing is in place. The standard of pupils' presentation, content and penmanship is very high.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith. Bíonn na múinteoirí ag súil le caighdeán ard foghlama ó na daltaí agus úsáideann siad Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil agus go foirmiúil i rith an lae. Cuirtear béim scoile-uile ar mhuintín agus inniúlacht na ndaltaí a fhorbairt chun struchtúr abairte cuí a úsáid agus ceisteanna a chur go héifeachtach i nGaeilge. Léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga agus úsáideann an chuid is mó díobh gramadach cruinn agus iad ag comhrá eatarthu féin agus leis na múinteoirí. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí á fhorbairt de réir a chéile. *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is very good. Teachers expect high standards of learning from the pupils and they use Irish fluently both informally and formally during the day. There is a whole-school emphasis on developing pupils' confidence and competence to use appropriate sentence structure and pose questions in Irish effectively. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards Irish and most of them use accurate grammar in their communication with each other and with teachers. Pupils' reading and writing skills are being incrementally developed.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Teachers' practice incorporates clear explanations of concepts and mathematical language; teachers model and facilitate purposeful use of concrete resources and relate mathematics to the pupils' everyday lives. A whole-school emphasis on the development of problem-solving skills is reflected in teaching and learning. While some examples of good quality differentiation were noted during the evaluation, there remains scope to develop these practices in particular for pupils who demonstrate higher ability and attainment. Extending the use of digital technology on a whole-school basis would be beneficial in this regard.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is good. Teachers use a good range of visual materials along with story to stimulate pupils' interest in and understanding of historical concepts. Pupils undertake field trips to museums and historic sites in the local community. History is successfully integrated with other curricular areas. Local and family history is a particular strength. While pupils have some opportunities to use their skills to work as historians, there remains scope to increase the opportunities to use and develop their skills through project work and research.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The quality of support for pupils is good overall. An inclusive and enabling culture has been well-established; pupils' holistic development and the building of their self-esteem and sense of belonging are central to the work of the school. A broad range of very effective strategies are used to develop pupils' emotional wellbeing and their social skills. A wide variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are provided for pupils.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language is good overall. Aspects which are praiseworthy include the respectful teacher-pupil relationships and the successful establishment of a range of in-class support models to complement the supplementary support provided for pupils by withdrawal from class. Commendable support has been provided for pupils who transitioned from the recently closed special class for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties reflecting very high levels of responsiveness to pupils and emerging needs. However, a significant number of

pupils work with multiple SETs and some pupils have many withdrawal periods from class during a typical day which impacts on the cohesiveness of their learning experiences. A review of the SET arrangements is now required with responsibility for ongoing monitoring to be assigned to a SEN co-ordinator.

- Considerable work has been done in the school to embed the Continuum of Support in the mainstream and special education contexts. School support plans are prepared by SET teachers, shared with mainstream teachers and shared verbally with pupils' parents during parent-teacher meetings. However, the use of classroom support plans is underdeveloped and the whole-school plan for special education requires updating.
- The work of the HSCL teacher in enhancing parental involvement in school activities and in assisting parents to support their children's learning is highly praiseworthy. The SCP worker makes a very valuable contribution to the range of supports provided by the school to a cohort of pupils.

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 acknowledges receipt of the Inspection Report. The board welcomes the report's findings, highlighting as they do the high standards of teaching, learning, planning and self-evaluation at the school. They are a very reassuring testimony to the commitment, competence and professionalism of the entire staff of St Oliver's.

The board wishes in particular to acknowledge the leadership and management skills of the acting principal ably supported by the acting deputy principal and a very dedicated set of teachers as exemplified by the report's findings on the teamwork of the staff. The board notes with satisfaction the particular emphasis in the report on the teaching and learning within the school being of a very high standard with pupils being enabled to work independently and collaboratively and having a high standard with pupils being enabled to work independently and collaboratively and having a high standard of achievement in all areas. The board is particularly pleased to see that a high standard of Irish was noted throughout all classes.

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 findings and recommendations as set out in the report will now be incorporated and will act as a guide and motivation in the school's continuing pursuit of excellence. A review of the SET arrangements is currently being undertaken with a view to incorporating recommendations as outlined in report and pupils will be given scope to increase historical knowledge by providing opportunities to use and develop skills through project work and research.

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.

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;