

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Macartan's Central
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bundoran County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19686S

Date of inspection: 24-09-2019



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, 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	24-09-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with chairperson 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

St. Macartan's Central National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clogher. The staff includes an administrative principal, eleven mainstream class teachers, four support teachers based in the school and one based elsewhere. There are 279 pupils enrolled and while the overall attendance is good, the board is aware of the poor attendance levels of a small number of pupils.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good; pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning but there is scope to provide further opportunities to use digital learning technologies (DLT) to support their learning.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; there is scope for improvement at whole-school level in the development of planning for the teaching of oral language skills in English and Irish.
- The quality of assessment is satisfactory; assessment-for-learning (AfL) strategies are not sufficiently developed throughout the school.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is good; the principal and staff foster a genuine commitment to the holistic development of pupils; attendance levels of a small number of pupils are very poor overall.
- School leadership and management are commendable; a culture of collaboration and a highly collegiate atmosphere is promoted.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pupils should be provided with meaningful opportunities to use digital learning technologies as a learning resource during appropriate lessons.
- Whole-school planning for English and Irish should be reviewed to ensure continuity and progression in the development of pupils' expressive skills in particular; a broader range of communicative experiences including discussion, dialogue and collaborative activities should be provided during lessons.
- The teachers should plan for the development of a whole-school approach to AfL including pupil, peer and self-assessment.
- The board should prioritise a strategic approach in promoting positive strategies for school attendance.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are good. Pupils can work independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner and they demonstrate high levels of engagement and participation in learning activities. They display high levels of ability to recall and discuss previous learning experiences, however their oral language skills in English and Irish could be further enhanced.
- In Mathematics, pupils have a very good understanding of concepts and use concrete materials including calculators effectively to support their learning. Pupils use appropriate mathematical strategies and apply their knowledge very successfully in a variety of contexts. Pupils are afforded good opportunities to discuss and explain mathematical thinking. In junior classrooms, pupils were enabled to integrate and connect different aspects of their Mathematics learning through participation in a range of purposeful and playful learning experiences.
- Pupils know a wide repertoire of poetry and enjoy their experiences in reciting poems throughout the school. The overall standard of pupils' handwriting and presentational skills is very high. Pupils respond well to teacher questioning. Digital learning technologies (DLT) were used effectively to stimulate whole class responses during half of the lessons observed, however, pupils were not afforded opportunities to engage with DLT as a learning tool. In pupil questionnaires, more than half of the pupils agreed that they use computers during some lessons. There is scope to provide pupils with opportunities to use DLT in supporting their learning more meaningfully.
- Tá caighdeán na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go sásúil ar an iomlán. Léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint shásúil ar an teanga le linn na gceachtanna. Tá gá le scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fheabhsú agus ba chóir na scileanna a fhorbairt go céimniúil ó rang go rang. B'fhiú deiseanna fíor-chumarsáide a chur ar fáil le linn na gceachtanna chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fheabhsú sa teanga. *The overall quality of learning in Irish is satisfactory. The pupils display a satisfactory understanding of the language during lessons. Pupils' oral language skills requires improvement and should be developed incrementally from class to class. Further opportunities for real communication should be provided during lessons so as to improve pupils' communication skills in the language.*
- Pupils can sing a variety of songs across a wide range of genre very well and with enjoyment. Performance in Music is a regular feature of classroom and school life. During the evaluation, pupils played the recorder confidently with due regard to pulse and tempo.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching observed in a few settings. Where very good teaching was observed there was a good balance between teacher-led input and facilitation of collaborative and active learning experiences. Almost all classroom environments are visually stimulating and scaffold pupils' learning in a highly effective manner. Teachers' questioning skills are very good and a broad range of useful resources is available to support teaching. In parent questionnaires, almost all parents agree that teaching is good in the school. A commendable approach was observed during one lesson where very good language experience approaches were used and responses were affirmed and extended. There is need however for teachers to agree and implement a systematic approach to the teaching of oral language skills in English and Irish.

- Overall, the quality of support for pupils with SEN is high. The SEN team implement the *Continuum of Support* model very successfully and SEN teachers have very effective school support plans in place. However, there is a need to develop support planning at classroom level. The good practice of target setting which is specific and measurable should be extended to all support planning for pupils with SEN so that pupil progress can be monitored. Interventions are delivered in a well-organised and nurturing manner. Principles of inclusion characterise the collaborative culture of the school and conscientious efforts are being made by the SEN team to deliver high quality co-teaching strategies.
- The overall quality of individual teacher planning is good, however, there is scope for improvement in whole-school planning. To enhance the effectiveness of whole-school planning, a cyclical approach to curricular content and skills to be developed by pupils should be clarified to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning from class to class. Teachers should plan collaboratively in a more purposeful way so as to guide appropriate progression in learning in Irish and English from class to class.
- A praiseworthy feature of teachers' collective practice is the significant commitment to attending continuing professional development (CPD) courses and the sharing of expertise and knowledge gained through these courses.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teachers use a wide range of diagnostic and summative assessments to ascertain the quality of learning. Pupils' achievements, including those of pupils with special educational needs, in summative assessments in English and Mathematics are at a good standard. Teachers regularly monitor and affirm pupils' work. Where very good practice was observed, constructive feedback was provided for pupils. In pupil questionnaire responses, a significant minority did not know how they were doing in Mathematics. In a small number of lessons observed, teachers provided clear learning intentions and success criteria relating to the lesson. In developing this commendable practice, there is need to provide a consistent and whole school approach to the provision of appropriately clear and targeted learning intentions and success criteria. This approach in turn will support the meaningful reflection on the quality of learning achieved at lesson conclusions. In reviewing the whole school policy for assessment guidance should be provided for teachers regarding AfL strategies including purposeful pupil self and peer-assessment.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is good. The principal and staff foster a genuine commitment to the holistic development of pupils. 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 that their child is safe and well looked after therein. Most but not all parents agreed that the school would act promptly if their child experienced bullying in school. This should be further explored at staff level.
- Almost all pupils in questionnaire responses agreed that their teacher listens to them and pays attention to what they say and that there are clear rules against hurting others. Less than half of the pupils agreed that they have a say in how things are done in the school. Consideration should be given to the re-establishment of the pupil council to promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice and pupil leadership.
- The school utilises a range of programmes which very effectively support the enhanced well-being of all pupils which promote respect and value diversity and inclusion.

- Pupils have access to a broad and varied curriculum, including a very good range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- The school has established links with the preschools and the post primary schools to support pupils in their transitions to junior infants and to post primary schools.
- Teachers develop and maintain strong links with external agencies to support pupils' social and emotional needs.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Overall, leadership and management are effective. The principal demonstrates significant strengths in many aspects of his work. He fosters and models a strong culture of trust, respect and a positive school climate. He is successful in creating an inclusive and supportive pupil-centred learning environment.
- The principal and other leaders in the school continuously strive for improvement by setting high expectations for pupils. They lead by example in promoting a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues in the creation of a highly collegiate atmosphere among all staff members. In questionnaire responses, all teachers agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school.
- The work of the in-school leadership team is of a high standard overall. All members of the team are highly committed and undertake a range of duties diligently. Identified school priorities have been included in assigned responsibilities for in-school leadership members.
- The board of management ensures the provision of a broad curriculum and a variety of learning opportunities. It meets regularly, minutes are maintained and accounts are certified annually. The board provides good quality teaching resources. As a next step, the board is advised to issue an annual report on its work to the parent body. The board is aware of the poor attendance levels of a small number of pupils and is taking appropriate action. It should prioritise a strategic approach in promoting positive strategies for school attendance.
- The management of communications and relations with the school community is a strength of the school. The parents' association provides very good support. The school should explore how parents' roles could be developed in supporting pupils' learning in school. Parent questionnaire responses indicated that almost all parents agreed that there is a good atmosphere and that they feel welcome in the school. Almost all parents agreed that they have been informed of the code of behaviour and most parents agreed that they have been informed of the anti-bullying policy. However, a significant minority indicate that they have not been informed of the Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) policy. While the school shares the policies with parents as they are reviewed, parental involvement should be further promoted in policy development and procedure.
- 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

- School self-evaluation (SSE) is good. Short-term planning has been effectively developed through the SSE process. Agreed approaches in mental maths and problem solving as part of the SSE process are having a positive impact on pupils' learning outcomes. While some targets, within planning for SSE, provide sufficient clarity regarding specific measurable

outcomes, there is scope to provide the same level of clarity for all target setting in both teaching and learning; this would assist teachers in implementing and monitoring the progress and outcomes of the agreed actions. As a next step, the SSE process could be used to plan for the development of oral language skills in line with the *Primary Language Curriculum*. The progress and outcomes of the SSE process should be shared with school community annually.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board and staff are delighted that the report acknowledges the positive, welcoming and inclusive climate of the school overall, and the work of all the staff, and in particular the SEN team, in fostering inclusion. The positive disposition of parents and children towards the schools, as reflected in questionnaires, and the support of the Parents' Association, are important contributory factors in this. The Board's work in facilitating this has also been recognised.

The report accurately accentuates many other favourable aspects of the school, for example pupils' learning in Mathematics, the emphasis on the holistic development of pupils, the respectful nature of pupils' interactions and teachers' individual planning and commitment to CPD. The strong school culture of collegiality and collaboration among all staff is also highlighted in the report.

The recommendations are fair and achievable, and more importantly can only add to our continuing efforts to improve the quality of education provided for all children in the school now, and in the future.

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 has used relevant grants to upgrade Wifi, and provide two sets of classroom iPads, as well as iPads for SETs. Use of existing interactive whiteboards has been acknowledged in the report. The Digital Learning Plan was completed last academic year. Through the implementation of this plan, which includes CPD for staff, an increase in the use of Digital Technologies as a learning resource will be achieved.
- Prior to the inspection the staff had begun a review of English and Irish policies to coincide with the implementation of the PLC. Following on from this inspection, increased focus will be placed on pupils' communication skills, in particular a progressive discrete Oral Language Plan.
- The aforementioned review includes relevant Assessment for Learning (AfL), and this will be extended to other areas and the overall assessment policy. CPD in this area will be encouraged.
- As stated in the report the Board is "aware of the poor attendance levels of a small number of pupils and is taking appropriate action". To this end the Board has included attendance as a focus of an APII post, and will continue to work closely with the EWO. Currently the school is participating in Tús's "Every School Day Counts" initiative, and will continue to implement, and participate in, initiatives of our own and those promoted by appropriate agencies.

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;