

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St John The Baptist Girls Primary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Old Road Cashel Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19692N

Date of inspection: 22-11-2019



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

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	22-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with the special educational needs team• Meeting with representatives 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. John the Baptist Girls Primary School is a Catholic mainstream school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. There are 345 pupils enrolled in the school. The staff consists of an administrative principal, thirteen mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers. The school recently received sanction for two positions for teachers of pupils who learn English as an additional language and the board is currently engaged in a recruitment process. Teaching and learning were evaluated in eight of the thirteen mainstream settings and all special education teachers were visited as part of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of learning is very good overall; performance in Music and Drama is at an exceptional standard.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall and the strong culture of professional collaboration among teachers is a strength of the school; the assessment of oral language and analysis of attainment in Mathematics are areas where there is scope for development.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good; there is scope for greater specificity in targets set in student support plans.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good; the school consistently implements a broad range of programmes to support and promote physical and mental well-being.
- Leadership and management are at a very high standard; the principal is a visionary leader who fosters a culture in which learning flourishes.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is good and a very broad range of targets for improvement are identified; there is potential to monitor more closely the impact of prioritised improvement initiatives on pupil learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should agree and implement strategies to consistently assess oral language attainment in both English and Irish and analyse strand-specific data available through standardised testing in Mathematics.
- The school should prioritise a small number of SSE improvement targets and set a mechanism to monitor the impact of these targets on learner outcomes.

- Targets established in student support plans should be more specific and measurable.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning is very good overall. Pupils display positive attitudes towards learning and their engagement in classwork contributes to their sense of well-being. Infant pupils experience an integrated learning programme through Aistear; *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and they, along with most pupils, exhibit very high levels of interest and excitement in their learning.
- Almost all pupils demonstrate very good ability to communicate clearly and confidently in English, although there is scope to further develop pupils' capacity for meaningful communication through Irish. Most pupils read with fluency and expression. Samples of pupils' writing indicate that they write in a range of genres in English and the quality of handwriting is very high. To further enhance pupils' language learning, it is advised that a more integrated approach be taken to ensure that the skills acquired in English are easily transferred to Irish, with a specific focus on extending the range of writing experiences provided for pupils in Irish.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good in general. Pupils demonstrate a good ability to estimate, compare and measure and they can apply their learning to practical tasks. Their written work indicates that they are provided with regular opportunities to collect, organise and represent data and that they successfully manage mathematical operations. While they are familiar with strategies that can be used to problem-solve, there is a need to provide increased opportunities for pupils to share their mathematical thinking when applying these strategies.
- Pupils with additional learning needs are well supported. There is a co-ordinated approach between the class teacher and the special education team in addressing the needs of the pupils with learning difficulties.
- Learning in the Arts is of a very high standard. High-quality learning experiences are provided for pupils to learn through and about Drama. In lessons observed, pupils demonstrated an understanding of musical concepts and an ability to read rhythmic notation. Musical performance is a regular feature in classrooms and the school choir, comprising of pupils from fourth to sixth class, sing to a very high standard in a broad range of musical genres.
- Pupils were observed to engage in high quality independent and collaborative learning. They showed good ability to discuss their learning and their capacity to assess their achievement is being developed as part of a current school initiative. Valuable and meaningful learner experiences were observed during the evaluation.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' efforts, engagement and behaviour and they successfully communicate these expectations to pupils. They identify and engage in continuing professional development to enhance their own practice and to enrich overall collective practice. They participate in regular collaborative review of teaching methodologies and use this review to identify and build on

effective approaches. They work together to agree topics and themes to be incrementally addressed in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education and in aspects of Physical Education. Scope to ensure the provision of a balanced programme of learning was noted with regard to the strand of *Materials* in Science and *Composition* in Music.

- Teachers successfully employ a wide range of methodologies in lessons. Literacy Lift Off is effectively implemented in infant and junior classes and the quality of teaching observed in this intervention and in station teaching in infant classes is excellent. Exemplary practice was noted in the planning and preparation for all lessons.
- Teaching of pupils with special education needs (SEN) is very good. The *Continuum of Support* is implemented to guide provision for pupils with SEN and pupil support plans are prepared and frequently reviewed. In order to further improve the overall quality of provision, it is recommended that targets set in support plans be more specific and measurable. It is further advised that the school assesses the impact of the recently introduced models of parallel teaching, relative to other models of intervention, to ensure that pupils with the greatest level of need are deriving the maximum benefit.
- Overall, the quality of assessment is good and an appropriate range of strategies is used to monitor and to evaluate learning. The school should agree and implement strategies to consistently assess oral language attainment in both English and Irish. It is also recommended that attainment in standardised testing be analysed further to highlight strands requiring additional attention at whole-school and at individual class level.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. School leaders establish an orderly, secure learning environment. A wide range of policies has been ratified by the board of management to ensure the health and well-being of pupils.
- The school is committed to the holistic development of pupils. Their interests and talents are developed and extended through sporting activities, through the Arts and through the consistent implementation of programmes on Social, Personal and Health Education. Among the areas prioritised by the school is the promotion of positive mental health and well-being for the whole school community. Specific focus is directed towards building capacity to self-regulate behaviours, to manage emotions and towards having positive self-attitudes and perspectives.
- Relationships and interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers are positive, respectful and conducive to well-being. The students' council hosts an annual friendship week and the school implements a robust policy on bullying. Through responses to questionnaires issued to parents as part of the evaluation, almost all agreed that the school helps with their child's social and emotional development. Responses received from pupil questionnaires reveal very positive attitudes towards the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management is fully aware of its statutory obligations and successfully fulfils its responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. It meets on a monthly basis and manages financial budgets efficiently to direct resources towards identified learning

priorities. Board members support teachers' continuing professional development in a range of areas.

- The principal demonstrates very good capacity to lead teaching and learning. She is a visionary leader who empowers teachers to take on leadership roles. She works purposefully to ensure that the curriculum is implemented in a manner that provides all pupils with valuable learning experiences. She promotes a culture of collaborative review of teaching practices. She clearly and consistently communicates the school's guiding vision to teachers and to pupils and inspires the school community to set high expectations for learning.
- The in-school leadership team ably fulfils an extensive range of duties and all team members demonstrate a genuine commitment to continued school improvement. Teachers who are not formally assigned duties willingly take responsibility for a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular aspects of provision. This culture of professional collaboration and generosity is a significant strength of the school.
- Representatives of the parents' association who met with inspectors as part of the evaluation described their active role in the school and emphasised their commitment to designing and overseeing events and activities to enhance learning experiences for pupils. They reported a close working relationship with the principal and described the open channels of communication which exist between the association, the principal and the board of management.
- Those in leadership roles value pupils' views and support pupils' involvement in the operation of the school. Approaches to achieving this include pupil participation on a range of committees, including Active and Green Schools committees and the students' council.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school self-evaluation is good. Review of provision and practice is embedded in school culture and a reflective whole-school process was underway in advance of the formal introduction of SSE. Commendably, the school regularly seeks the views of pupils as part of its self-evaluation processes. A very broad range of action plans for improvement is implemented. These include improvement initiatives in literacy, Mathematics and digital learning. Teachers' overall collective practice is advanced through these initiatives. It is now advised that the school reviews the range of programmes and extensive range of targets currently being implemented and prioritise some of these initiatives in the short-term. These prioritised action plans should then be monitored closely to check for consistent implementation and to measure the impact on pupils' learning outcomes.

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;

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. John the Baptist Girls' Primary School welcomes this very positive Whole School Evaluation Report which acknowledges and affirms the dedication and commitment of the school staff, the board, the principal the in-school management team, the parents' association and parent body of our school. The board is pleased that the report identifies and acknowledges the high standards of learning, teaching and pupil achievement evident in the school. The board is particularly pleased that the culture of respect, positive school atmosphere and the support and care for pupils' wellbeing have been acknowledged. The board was affirmed by the positive feedback from the parent questionnaires and in particular, the overwhelming positivity received from pupil questionnaires acknowledged in this report.

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 of management acknowledges and welcomes the recommendations contained within the report. The school appreciates the opportunity to use the recommendations in its self-evaluation and self-improvement processes.