

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Holy Family Junior N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Forest Fields Swords Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19721R

Date of inspection: 17-10-2019



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	17-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school management 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 and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the principal, deputy principal and teachers, and chairperson of the board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Family Junior National School is a co-educational junior school catering for pupils from junior infants to second class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. The staff consists of an administrative principal and deputy principal, twenty-five mainstream teachers with one of the mainstream teachers allocated to a support role and thirteen special educational needs teachers (SET). There are 644 pupils enrolled and attendance levels are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning is good overall with some aspects being very good, in particular, pupils' confident sense of number and positive dispositions towards reading; however, there remains an over-emphasis on transcription and closed learning activities in many instances.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; while careful consideration is given to supporting pupils with special educational needs (SEN), the current model of provision does not fully reflect the principles of Circular 0013/2017 and requires further review.
- The quality of assessment is good; while there are structures in place to support the progression of pupils from class to class, assessment data is not used sufficiently well to differentiate teaching and learning for the range of abilities within cohorts of classes.
- Support for pupils' well-being is very good; respectful and affirming interactions are key features of practice.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good; the recently appointed principal and deputy principal have successfully nurtured a culture of collaboration among staff and the school community.
- The quality of school-self-evaluation (SSE) is very good; improvement initiatives are characterised by innovation and informed by ongoing professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional opportunities for pupils to engage in independent writing and open-ended learning activities that allow them to explore their creativity and develop higher-order thinking skills would further enhance their learning.
- The staff is advised to reconfigure arrangements for pupils with SEN in accordance with DES circular 0013/2017, to further embed the Continuum of Support model and to ensure that provision is more proportionately aligned with pupils' prioritised learning needs.
- The good practices of using assessment purposefully to differentiate planning and provision for pupils at individual and class level, should be extended on a whole-school basis; this should

include the provision of additional opportunities for pupils to reflect on and share their knowledge, understanding and skills.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning is good with aspects of pupils' learning being very good, particularly in relation to their understanding and attainment in Mathematics and reading. Where learning was of a very high quality, pupils were enabled to reflect on and articulate their understanding of key concepts, along with their use of skills and strategies. Pupils would benefit from more regular opportunities to work collaboratively and to reflect on their learning experiences and achievements. Overall, pupils demonstrate very positive learning dispositions particularly towards reading, with many of them achieving at very high levels. Teachers have identified aspects of pupils' learning which require improvement including handwriting, independent creative writing, phonological awareness and comprehension and have adopted strategies to further learning in these areas.
- Pupils enjoy a wide variety of learning experiences and have regular opportunity to be active in their learning. In particular, pupils in infant classes have regular opportunities to engage in play-based, integrated and thematic learning. In a few contexts, this playful learning consists of structured activities with a limited range of pre-determined learning outcomes. Where pupil learning was noted to be very good, they engaged in open-ended, playful learning activities that allowed them to explore and express their creativity. Extending these practices on a whole-school basis would further enhance pupils' learning experiences and outcomes.
- Pupils demonstrated very good enjoyment in performing a wide range of songs and poems in English and Irish during the evaluation in all classes. In a significant number of settings, pupils showed commendable understanding of the language forms taught through poetry and songs and were able to draw on this in their interactions.
- The analysis of the questionnaire data submitted by parents indicates high levels of satisfaction in relation to pupils' learning.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall with some examples of practice being very good, others being satisfactory and a very small number of lessons observed requiring improvement. Where individual teacher practice was noted to be very good, it was characterised by very effective use of assessment information to provide formative feedback to pupils and to differentiate the teaching and learning experience in accordance with pupils' learning needs and styles. Extending this practice on a whole-school basis is recommended. Teachers are very clear communicators and are affirming in their interactions with pupils. Very good classroom management and motivation strategies are evident. Attractive learning environments with child-friendly displays are created by teachers. An extensive variety of concrete resources is used very effectively within lessons and, of particular note, is the wide range of books available to support thematic teaching and learning.
- *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* was introduced in the school in 2017 and underpins teachers' practice in infant classes. In a few instances, activities were insufficiently open-ended to develop the pupils' use of the language. Where practice was highly effective, it was characterised by meaningful opportunities for pupils to implement and build on pre-

exposed language structures and vocabulary with the teacher carefully observing and knowing when to intervene to aid development.

- A positive culture of collaboration has been fostered among staff and underpins a number of successful improvement initiatives. While it is commendable that teachers plan collaboratively at each class level, the practice of having one short-term plan for each of the six classes at each of the four class levels necessitates further contextualisation and differentiation to ensure that teachers' individual planning is more closely aligned to the needs of the pupils in each cohort. A variety of practices is evident among teachers regarding the preparation and review of documentation relating to the Continuum of Support for pupils with SEN. Classroom support plans are not yet established on a whole-school basis. The targets in the School Support and School Support Plus plans are generic in many instances and insufficiently specific to facilitate close monitoring of pupils' progression.
- Continuing professional development has had a positive impact on teachers' individual and collective practice in both mainstream and SET contexts. A range of suitable models has been successfully established to support pupils with special educational needs. These include provision of support by withdrawal and in-class interventions in literacy and numeracy along with team-teaching during the integrated *Aistear* sessions in junior infant classes. However, the level of special educational needs existing within class cohorts varies significantly and the allocation of SET resources does not always align proportionately to the level of need. Timetabling of SET supports also requires review in some instances to optimise the learning experiences and outcomes for pupils. A review of SEN policy has been undertaken by the recently appointed SEN co-ordinator and further consideration should now be given to the reconfiguration of arrangements for pupils with SEN to ensure that provision is more proportionately aligned with pupils' prioritised learning needs and to further embed the Continuum of Support model.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. A positive and nurturing culture has been established that reflects a strong emphasis on fostering pupils' positive sense of identity and belonging. Respectful and affirming interactions between pupils and staff were evident during the evaluation. Celebrating pupils' talents and achievements is reflected in various class and whole-school award systems. Daily routines and the management of transitions provide valuable opportunities for pupils to make decisions. Pupils' holistic development and well-being is enhanced by their participation in a wide range of initiatives. Many pupils could articulate the benefits of being involved in the Green Schools programme and could explain the purpose of the buddy benches.
- Physical well-being is promoted effectively using a variety of approaches including the 'Drop all and Dance' initiative and movement breaks.
- A strong sense of community is evident within the school and many valuable links have been established with the local community. Links with pre-schools and the senior school are well developed to support pupils in their transitions and to facilitate continuity in learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The board of management shows commendable commitment to the ongoing development of the school and the quality of education provided.

- The principal demonstrates a clear understanding of the school's priorities and fosters positive relationships with the stakeholders in the school community. He works collaboratively with the administrative deputy principal to manage the organisation and lead learning. Together with the in-school management team, they facilitate ongoing improvement. The leadership capabilities of staff are also nurtured with many examples of innovative leadership resulting in positive developments for pupils.
- The data from the parent questionnaires distributed during the evaluation indicates that almost all parents are satisfied that the school is well run and the data indicated that all parents think that the school is welcoming of parents. The school is ably supported by a proactive parents' association; parent representatives report that they are consulted regularly on school related issues.
- The management and staff of the school facilitate 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

- The quality of school self-evaluation is very good. The ISM team has been proactive in identifying areas for development in consultation with the staff and parent community. They have successfully introduced and managed a number of improvement initiatives that have impacted positively on the quality of pupils' learning. These include a whole-school approach to the development of oral language, comprehension skills, the introduction of *Aistear* and the promotion of activity-based learning in Mathematics. Staff members have shown considerable initiative in producing a range of resources for use within the context of their own school.

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 acknowledges the report for the recent WSE-MLL provided by the Inspectorate. The Board would like to express its appreciation to the staff for their diligence and their commitment to the children in the care. We are very pleased that the report identified the positive and nurturing culture and strong sense of community within the school, together with the very good quality of support for the pupil's well-being. The extremely positive opinions expressed in the parents' questionnaires were very affirming.

The report notes the very positive dispositions of the pupils toward learning and their high levels of achievement in Mathematics and reading.

The report reinforces the very good classroom management strategies, the positive culture of collaboration and the positive impact of engagement in CPD. The Board is pleased that the attractive learning environments together with child-friendly displays and effective use of resources are deemed worthy of very positive comments.

The Board is gratified that the success of the work of the staff and ISM team in identifying areas for development under the SSE process were noted. The areas addressed have impacted positively on pupil's learning.

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 acknowledges the reports' recommendations, many of which had been identified, and are in the process of being addressed. These recommendations will inform the continuing process of SSE and planning within the school.

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 <i>very good</i> 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;