

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

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

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Francis N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newcastle Co Wicklow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19734D

Date of inspection: 24-01-2019



**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	24-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership 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 pupil 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. Francis National School is a rural, co-educational primary school catering for 106 pupils. The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archdiocese of Dublin and Glendalough. Overall, the attendance of the pupils enrolled is very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Leadership and management at all levels is effective, with the principal and board members promoting effective communication across the school community; curriculum leadership needs further development.
- Although the quality of the pupils' learning achievements is good overall, there is a need to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, with teachers displaying very high levels of commitment to their work; there is scope to extend teaching methodologies and assessment practices.
- Support for pupils' well-being is good with very good emphasis placed on environmental awareness and care.
- While teachers plan conscientiously for their lessons, in some instances there is an over-reliance on textbooks to guide planning.
- The school is commended on their engagement with the process of school self-evaluation, with agreed actions having a positive impact on pupils' learning in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The principal, together with the in-school management team, should strengthen their curriculum leadership role, and develop a culture of shared responsibility for driving improvements in teaching and learning.
- Teachers should plan more specific learning outcomes for lessons, outcomes should be monitored and consolidated during lessons, and more emphasis should be placed on challenging the pupils to problem solve, to clarify and to share their thinking.
- Assessment information should be analysed more rigorously to inform differentiated programmes of learning, and to guide teachers' individual and collective practices.
- Drawing on approaches and methodologies which promote meaningful inclusion, special education teachers and class teachers should collaboratively plan interventions, ensuring that pupils' priority learning needs are appropriately addressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of the pupils' learning, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Pupils are motivated to learn, enjoy their learning and show high levels of participation in learning activities. The presentation of the pupils' work across the curriculum is particularly noteworthy, and copybooks are maintained to a high standard. Very good attention is given to penmanship and grammar in pupils' written work.
- While most pupils are able to recall content learned across the curriculum, many pupils have difficulty in applying their knowledge to different contexts, communicating their thoughts to each other, and justifying their answers. To further progress the development of pupils' skills, pupils should be provided with more opportunities to problem solve, to clarify and share their thinking, and to reflect on their own learning across all subjects.
- Most pupils demonstrate confidence in the use of mathematical language and in their understanding of mathematical concepts. Many pupils' oral language skills in Irish and English are well developed. Pupils generally read confidently in English and in Irish. The schools' library is praiseworthy and provides a variety of reading material for pupils. In their responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire, all parents agree that the school is helping their child progress with reading.
- The pupils' learning achievements in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) and the Arts are commendable. Many high-quality projects are evident. Most pupils demonstrate a good sense of their locality and display a good knowledge of the strands of the science curriculum.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching in mainstream classes and support settings is good overall. Teachers demonstrate high levels of diligence and commitment to their work. Commendably, a strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of content and language across the curriculum. More emphasis should now be placed on challenging the pupils to clarify and share their thinking during lessons.
- Teachers deliver high-quality lessons in the teaching of grammar and spellings, and they facilitate a variety of writing tasks. To further develop pupils' writing skills, more emphasis should be placed on teaching all stages of the writing process, along with the specific structures and language associated with particular genres.
- Teachers plan conscientiously and they prepare suitable resources and activities for their lessons. In some instances, there is a tendency to over-rely on textbooks to guide planning and lesson content. Teachers should plan, teach and assess intended learning outcomes based on curriculum content objectives. In addition, the learning outcomes should be monitored and consolidated during the lessons.
- The implementation of the Continuum of Support at whole-school level is commended. To further enhance the impact of the use of the Continuum of Support and to provide for the full range of learning needs, targets for each pupil should be more specific and measurable. Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, should plan their interventions to address pupils' priority learning needs. Careful consideration should be given to choosing approaches and methodologies that promote meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, team-teaching and small-group teaching.
- The decision to withdraw whole classes for Mathematics does not focus adequately on the specific needs of the pupils requiring additional support. The practice of whole-class withdrawal should be discontinued in order to prioritise support for the pupils in most need.

- While teachers gather an appropriate range of assessment data, there is little consistency in terms of overall practice. Some effective practices were observed, including the careful tracking of pupils' progress, the provision of formative feedback to pupils, and the adjusting of teaching approaches to improve pupils' learning. The outcomes of assessment should be analysed more rigorously in order to inform differentiated programmes of learning in classes and to guide teachers' individual and collective practices.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is good. There is a culture of mutual respect throughout the school and teachers manage pupils in a positive and affirming way. A good range of programmes is used to support pupils' well-being such as *Friends for Life* and *Weaving Well-Being*. Positive links are established with post-primary schools.
- In responses to questionnaires, almost all pupils surveyed agree that they feel safe in the playground and that they have learned about different kinds of bullying. However, a significant minority agree that they have a say in how things are done in the school. It is advised that the school explore ways to further enhance pupils' voice and opportunities for leadership within the school.
- Very good emphasis is placed on environmental awareness and care, and this is reflected in the school's very successful involvement in the local community, annual beach cleans, gardening activities, Green Schools Programme, and their links with BirdWatch Ireland.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Leadership and management in the school is of a good quality. The highly committed board meets regularly, supports the work of the school, and minutes of meetings are recorded carefully. An orderly, secure and healthy learning environment is established. The board is highly commended for preparing an agreed report and sharing this information with the wider community.
- While the board is commended for its involvement in developing and implementing school policies, not all policies are fully in line with the Department of Education and Skills circulars and guidelines, including Anti-bullying, Special Educational Needs Circular 13/17, and the annual certification of school accounts in accordance with the Education Act 1998. The board should now ensure that procedures are further developed to verify that all school policies are in keeping with Department guidelines.
- The principal promotes a positive and caring atmosphere throughout the school. She demonstrates effective organisational skills in relation to the day-to-day running of the school and in policy formation. She is ably supported by the members of the in-school management team who carry out their assigned duties diligently. While the team meets informally, formal meetings are not convened. Records of decisions made and actions to be undertaken are not documented. It is recommended that formal meetings be commenced with an emphasis on curriculum leadership. The team should ensure that there are collaborative processes in place allowing teachers to share creative teaching practices, to agree whole-school approaches, and to monitor and evaluate their implementation.
- The parents' association and wider parent body support the work of the school. Very effective communication channels between home and school have been established. In response to the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents surveyed agreed that they are happy with the school. While policies are made available, there is a need to involve parents more in their formation and review. The board should enhance the involvement of parents in relevant school policies.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school is commended on its effective engagement with the school self-evaluation process. Teachers collaborated in devising learning opportunities for pupils, and agreed actions are being implemented consistently. Teachers report that this process is having a positive impact on pupils' learning in SPHE.
- The schools' capacity to develop further is very good. The staff, principal and board demonstrate very high levels of commitment to the school, and a positive attitude towards school improvement is evident.

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 are pleased with the many positive findings of the report. We appreciate the recommendations which we find very helpful.

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 finds the recommendations of the report very helpful and are committed to implementing them. The School teaching staff, together with the Board of Management, will collaboratively review each recommendations and plan for its implementation in order to further enhance teaching and learning for the benefit of all our pupils.