

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Dromclough N S |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Listowel Co Kerry |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 19957A |

Date of inspection: 15-01-2020



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 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

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| Dates of inspection | 15-01-2020 |
| Inspection activities undertaken | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires • Review of relevant documents • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils’ work • Interaction with pupils • Meeting with student council and committees • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to board of management representative |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team • Meeting with representatives of the board of management • Meeting with representatives of the parents’ association • Meeting with teachers • Meeting with special education teachers | |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Dromclough national school is a Catholic coeducational, mainstream school situated in a rural setting. It is one of three schools in the parish of Lixnaw. Current staffing consists of an administrative principal, ten mainstream teachers and four special education teachers (SETs). Two SETs based in other schools provide an additional nine hours of support to pupils with learning needs. There are 247 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good; the further development of pupils’ emergent literacy skills would enhance their learning.
- Pupils’ learning experiences are of a very high standard and contribute significantly to the quality of their learning; the development of a whole-school Digital Learning Plan would extend the variety of experiences provided.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good across mainstream and special education settings; some variation was noted in the quality of target setting for pupils with special educational needs.
- While assessment practices are of a high standard, there is scope to extend the use of available data to further inform the deployment of SETs and to plan for greater differentiation.
- The quality of support for pupils’ wellbeing is of an exceptionally high standard and is a key strength of the school.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good; together the principal and in-school leadership team play a key role in leading teaching and learning.
- The quality of school self-evaluation is good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should place increased emphasis on the development of pupils’ emergent literacy skills deploying additional resources to early intervention initiatives where appropriate.
- The school should develop a whole-school Digital Learning Plan which incorporates clear targets and priorities for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.
- A standardised approach to planning and recording for pupils in receipt of support should be adopted and implemented.

- Data generated from assessments should be used more effectively to inform the deployment of SETs and to further inform differentiated practice in mainstream lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils experience a broad and integrated curriculum and a very good balance is struck between the acquisition of knowledge and the development of concepts and skills. This has resulted in pupils displaying an ability to competently question, think critically, solve problems and to interact effectively with others.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good ability to communicate clearly and confidently in both English and Irish. Their writing samples indicate an understanding of syntax and sentence structure. Pupils are facilitated to engage with texts at age-appropriate levels and they read with fluency and understanding. In the infant and junior classes, pupils are commendably facilitated to listen to, enjoy and respond to a wide range of stories, nursery rhymes, poems and songs. Placing an increased emphasis on the development of pupils' emergent reading skills at these levels would build on the very good practice observed.
- Pupils learning outcomes and experiences in Mathematics are of an exceptionally high standard. They display very good computational skills. Their skills development is reflected in their ability to apply mathematical concepts and processes in a variety of contexts.
- In Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), pupils' recall of key facts is very impressive. Very good emphasis is placed on the exploration of local history and pupils have a comprehensive knowledge of local and regional geography. In Science, they have engaged with a number of experiments. While the skills of working as an historian, geographer and scientist are well developed, there is scope to focus to a greater extent on the *designing and making* aspect of the SESE curriculum.
- The very high quality learning experiences provided for pupils in the Arts have resulted in their acquisition of commendable learning outcomes in Music, Visual Arts and Drama.
- Pupils engage actively in a very wide range of physical activities. Lessons commendably place an emphasis on active participation and strike a balance between competitive and non-competitive activities.
- The Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum is very effectively delivered. Consequently, pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and of working cooperatively. They are keenly aware of their rights and responsibilities. They exercise care and consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with others.
- While good practice in the use of information and communications technology was noted in a number of classrooms, the school should develop a whole-school Digital Learning Plan which incorporates clear targets for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very good across mainstream and special education settings. Teachers prepare comprehensively for lessons. In general, high quality individual education plans (IEPs) are prepared for pupils with additional learning needs. In the majority of these plans, clear learning targets are outlined, pupil progress is systematically recorded and informs subsequent planning. It is recommended that this good practice be shared and that a standardised approach be adopted to planning and recording to meet the needs of pupils in receipt of support.

- In all lessons observed, pupils' contributions were encouraged and appreciated. Every effort was made to ensure that learning was meaningful, practical and linked to real-life experiences. Pupils were encouraged to question, think critically and justify their opinions. Thought was given to the different ways that children learn and independent work was skilfully promoted. Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in project and collaborative work. This provides them with opportunities to apply their learning from different subjects and to appreciate the interconnectedness of knowledge.
- The overall quality of assessment is good. Teachers use a very wide range of assessment practices. Pupils' written work is regularly monitored and evaluated. There remains scope however to review whole-school approaches to the assessment of and for learning. Data generated should be used more effectively to inform the deployment of SETs and to plan for further differentiated practice in mainstream lessons.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is of an exceptionally high standard and is a key strength of the school. There is a genuine commitment to the holistic development of each pupil. Pupils are encouraged and facilitated to engage in a very wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated at weekly assemblies. Almost all parents, in their responses to questionnaires, agree that their child feels safe and well looked after in the school and that the school helps their children's social and personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are respectful and caring. Pupil voice, participation and leadership are very effectively promoted.
- Pupils spoke of the learning they derive from their engagement in various committees. They stated that this has led to a deepened understanding of democracy and of the importance of representing and listening to others.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management is deeply committed to the school. It has undertaken major building works, cyclically reviews and ratifies school policies and each member discharges its individual and corporate roles in a highly diligent manner. It is advised that the Relationship and Sexuality Education policy be reviewed, in consultation with parents, to reflect current provision.
- The principal provides exceptionally high quality leadership to the school. She articulates a clear vision which focuses on the holistic development of each child and on the creation of a caring and inclusive school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.
- The in-school leadership team (ILT) comprises a deputy principal and an assistant principal post. A second assistant principal post is in the process of being advertised by the board. The ILT works in close cooperation with the principal, discharging a comprehensive range of duties in a highly professional and diligent manner. Together with the principal, they play a key role in leading teaching and learning and in promoting best practice. Commendably, all teachers are facilitated to assume roles in leading teaching and learning in different subject areas.
- Representatives of the parents' association outlined the key areas in which they support the school including the organisation of guest speakers. They report that relationships and communication with the board and school are very open and mutually supportive.
- Pupil voice is very effectively promoted through the engagement of pupils on the Student Council and in the Active School, Green Flag and Health Promoting committees.

- The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is highly praised and provides valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of the school's engagement in self-evaluation practices is good. It is evident that there is a deep commitment among staff to the promotion of reflective practices and to the sharing of expertise. The SSE process is used effectively and previous improvement plans have impacted positively on pupil learning outcomes and teachers' collective practice. The setting of more specific targets would assist greatly in monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvement plans on pupil learning outcomes and experiences.

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 Dromclough NS welcomes this very positive Whole School Evaluation - MLL Report. The board, staff, principal, parents' association and parents in general are affirmed by the acknowledgement of their commitment and dedication to the school. The principal and teachers are delighted that both learning and teaching are evaluated as being "very good", with Mathematics being of an exceptionally high standard, and also that teachers' preparation is considered comprehensive.

The safety and overall wellbeing of our pupils is, always has, and will continue to be the main priority of management and staff. We are pleased that this is noted as a key strength of the school and that our pupils are complimented on their courtesy and good-manners. The holistic development of each pupil is our primary aim.

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 and staff value the advice and guidance offered and embrace the recommendations.

- There will be increased emphasis on emergent literacy skills by deploying the SET team in this area to allow for more station teaching.
A whole-school Digital Learning Plan for Technology is already in preparation. It will enhance and expand the good practice in the use of technology already noted in classrooms.
- The SET team is currently exploring a more streamlined and uniform approach to planning and recording for pupils in receipt of support.
Assessment findings will be reviewed to refocus on areas for support teaching.
- The recommendations will be incorporated into our on-going school self-evaluation process, and will undoubtedly enhance current and future provision and the development of the school.