

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Naomh Fionán
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Whitecastle Quigley's Point County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19959E

Date of inspection: 20-05-2019



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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	20-05-2019
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, 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

Scoil Naomh Fionán is a co-educational, rural primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry. The staff includes an administrative principal, nine mainstream class teachers and three special education teachers. Currently there are 240 pupils enrolled in the school. While very good attendance patterns were observed overall, there is a small minority of pupils who have poor attendance. The board should continue to prioritise targeted pupil-attendance interventions in order to improve attendance levels.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is of a very good standard; pupils are supported very well in their learning.
- Teaching is of a very high quality although oral language skills in Irish are not developed systematically throughout the school.
- The overall quality of assessment is good.
- The quality of support for pupils with SEN is very effective; the principles of inclusion characterise the visible collaborative culture of the school.
- The quality of leadership and management is very effective.
- The quality of whole school planning including school self-evaluation (SSE) is good; however, target setting in support plans and school improvement plans are not suitably measurable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should plan for the systematic development of pupils' oral skills in Irish from class to class.
- A more consistent and meaningful whole-school approach to the use of assessment data in informing target setting in SSE and student support files should be agreed and implemented.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of learning, including for pupils with SEN is very good. During lessons observed, pupils demonstrated a clear sense of enjoyment in their learning. Overall pupils are provided with clear guidance about the purpose of their activities; in some instances the provision of visual references would enhance learning. Very good quality samples of pupils' work are displayed in classrooms which include writing genres, Science, Geography, History and Irish. Most pupils, in response to the questionnaires, agree that they are doing well at reading and Mathematics.
- Pupils engage very well in school initiatives such as the Active Flag and the Green School programme which engender a sense of school community. The overall learning of pupils from these worthwhile programmes integrates very effectively with curricular subjects including Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Mathematics and Physical Education. Pupils' scientific skills in investigating, recording, analysing and hypothesising are very well developed throughout the school through very specific and highly appropriate learning experiences that are appropriately challenging and stimulating. Pupils experience a wide range of very effective learning opportunities including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and participate in the Discover Primary Science and Maths Award. The school is currently working towards their tenth Green Flag award and their fourth Active Flag award.
- Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to participate in activity based learning including the use of purposeful group work with assigned roles and responsibilities. Meaningful discussion and collaboration is a key feature of lessons across the various curricular areas including some opportunities for pupils to summarise and articulate their learning to peers. The pupils engage well in self and peer-assessment; however, further pupil assessment techniques for the varying class levels and abilities would enhance provision.
- Ar an iomlán, tá gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá raon leathan de rannta, dánta agus amhráin ar eolas acu, rud a chuireann go héifeachtach lena bhfoghraíocht agus rithim na teanga. Tá deiseanna rialta ag na daltaí an Ghaeilge a chleachtadh i dtascanna fíorchumarsáideacha. *Overall, pupils' achievements in Irish are good. Pupils know a wide range of rhymes, poems and songs which contributes effectively to the development of pronunciation and rhythm when using the language. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise Irish in authentic communicative tasks.*

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers demonstrate a very visible enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subjects taught and motivate the pupils to engage in and enjoy their learning. Highly effective classroom management strategies are employed using pupil centred democratic processes across the school where pupil voice is sought and valued. Teachers use digital learning technologies (DLT) competently as a teaching resource. In pupil questionnaires, less than half of the pupils agreed that they use computers during some lessons. There is scope to provide pupils with further opportunities to use DLT to support their learning. In parent questionnaires, almost all parents agree that teaching is good in the school.
- Teachers employ a wide range of teaching approaches including dialogic practice during lessons and prepare stimulating and curriculum appropriate resources to engage the

learners. This includes a very effective emphasis on providing a balance between meaningful teacher input and pupil participation. Notwithstanding this very good practice, there is, at present, some variation in the teaching methods employed in progressing oral language skills in Irish. Where excellent practice was observed, the meaningful use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was implemented to a very high standard in promoting very positive dispositions towards second language learning. There is need, on the whole, to develop, agree and implement consistent approaches at each class level to promote the progressive development of pupils' communication skills. During exemplary lessons in the language, a richness of language teaching was observed. A very clear implementation of the communicative approach was routinely embedded and this very good practice should be extended on a developmental basis across the whole school. *Baineann múinteoirí úsáid as réimse leathan cur chuige teagaisc lena n-áirítear cleachtas dialógach le linn ceachtanna agus ullmhaíonn siad acmhainní spreagúla agus curaclaim cuí chun rannpháirtíocht na bhfoghlaimoirí a chothú. Cuimsíonn sé seo béim an-éifeachtach ar chothromaíocht a sholáthar idir ionchur bhríoch an mhúinteora agus rannpháirtíocht daltaí. D'ainneoin an dea-chleachtais seo, faoi láthair tá roinnt éagsúlachta sna modhanna teagaisc a úsáidtear chun scileanna teanga labhartha a chur chun cinn sa Ghaeilge. Sa sár-chleachtas a breathnaíodh, cuireadh úsáid an Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga (FCÁT) i bhfeidhm ar chaighdeán an-ard maidir le meon an-dearfach a chur chun cinn maidir le foghlaim dara teanga. Tá gá le cur chuige straitéiseach a fhorbairt, a aontú agus a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn níos comhsheasmhaí ar an iomlán chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a chur chun cinn. Le linn ceachtanna eiseamláireacha sa teanga, breathnaíodh saibhreas teagaisc teanga. Bhí cur i bhfeidhm an-soiléir an chur chuige chumarsáideach leabaithe go rialta agus ba chóir an cleachtas an-mhaith seo a leathnú go forbraitheach ar bhonn scoile uile.*

- Lesson structure and pace includes regular reference to learning objectives during lessons. A more consistent use of visual references for pupils of all abilities in providing clarity regarding the intended aims of each lesson should be provided on a more consistent basis.
- A praiseworthy feature of teachers' collective practice is the significant commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) and the sharing of expertise and knowledge gained through these courses.
- The overall quality of assessment is good. Teachers use and analyse a range of class based and standardised assessments. Commendable practice has been established with some examples of very good assessment based on learning objectives which were analysed to inform future planning. Where very good assessment was observed, mainstream class teacher observations linked very effectively with concepts and topics taught and very appropriate analysis of the data collected meaningfully informed their forward planning for differentiation. This very good practice should be employed on a more cohesive basis to provide increasing levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities including more able pupils.
- The quality of support for pupils with SEN is very good. Principles of inclusion characterise the visible collaborative culture of the school, where all teachers work together in delivering high quality learning experiences for all pupils. All teachers, with guidance from SEN teachers, have worked towards establishing student support files for identified pupils aligned with the *Continuum of Support*. Targets in individual pupil support plans are informed by priority learning needs. However, in the majority of plans reviewed, the learning targets set for pupils were insufficiently specific and measurable.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. This is demonstrated through the highly reflective and responsive actions of teachers and management in catering for the changing needs of the school community. The school utilises a range of programmes which very effectively support the enhanced well-being of all pupils including the Friends for Life programme and various others 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 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.
- The school has plans in place to establish a pupil council to further promote and facilitate pupil voice.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The chairperson and members of the board are highly supportive of the professional development of teachers, including building leadership capacity.
- The principal and other leaders in the school continuously strive for excellence by setting high expectations for pupils. They lead by example in promoting a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners. This results in a highly collegiate atmosphere among all staff members. All teachers agree in questionnaires that there is a good atmosphere in the school.
- The in-school management team meets regularly and have opportunities to share practices that have proved successful during learning. The principal and other leaders in the school strategically and effectively manage curriculum related planning; where exemplary planning was noted it was contextualised to the needs and strengths of the school.
- The work of the board of management is very effective. It meets regularly, minutes are maintained and accounts are certified. It maintains the buildings and grounds to a very high standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a very high standard to enable their optimal use. As a next step, the board is advised to issue an annual report on its work to the parent body.
- During the evaluation, parents' representative were of the view that there was a very high standard of teaching and learning in the school and that pupils were very happy overall. The board should explore how parents might develop their leadership roles within the school by supporting them in becoming affiliated with the national parents' council.
- 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

- The overall quality of whole school planning including school self-evaluation (SSE) is good. Individual teachers provide appropriate long-term plans. Short-term planning is currently in monthly format; the school should now adopt a fortnightly planning format as set down in the Rules for National Schools revised.
- Agreed approaches as part of the SSE process are having a positive impact on pupils' learning outcomes. While some targets provide sufficient clarity regarding specific and measurable outcomes there is scope to provide the same level of clarity for all target setting; this would assist teachers in implementing and monitoring the progress and outcomes of the agreed actions.

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 Scoil Naomh Fionán welcomes this very positive report and its affirmation of the dedication and commitment of staff and board members. The Board appreciates the recognition of the quality of support for pupils' well-being in catering for the changing needs of the school community. The Board particularly welcomes this report's acknowledgement of the following:

1. The very high quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
2. The very effective quality of support for pupils with SEN
3. The recognition that all pupils are supported very well in their learning.
4. Scoil Naomh Fionán's culture of inclusion and collaboration
5. The very effective quality of leadership and management.

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 accepts the recommendations made in this report and will ensure a plan of action is undertaken to implement same.

1. The Board will develop and expand the meaningful use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) across all class levels, on a whole school basis, to promote the progressive development of pupils' communication skills. Very good practice noted in the report will be extended on a developmental basis across the whole school.
2. The Board will plan for a more consistent and meaningful use of assessment data in the setting of targets in SSE and Student Support Files. Assessment data will inform reviews of both School Improvement Plans and School Support Plans.

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;