

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

**Whole School Evaluation**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School Name</b>	Saint Clare's National School
<b>Seoladh na scoile/ School Address</b>	Virginia Road Ballyjamesduff County Cavan
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	19983B

**Date of inspection: 18-09-2019**



---

An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **WHAT IS WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION?**

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school. In addition to evaluating leadership and management, school planning and self-evaluation, and support for pupils, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and one other subject.

## **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 leadership and management
2. The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. The quality of support for pupils

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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	18-09-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Feedback to teachers, senior management and board and parent representatives</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with principal</li><li>• Meeting with board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Meeting with in-school management team</li><li>• Meeting with special education team</li><li>• Meeting with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li></ul>	

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Clare's National School is an urban, co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. The attendance patterns of the 435 pupils enrolled are good overall. English is an additional language for a significant minority of pupils. The school has an administrative principal, seventeen mainstream class teachers and nine special education teachers including a teacher of a special class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Leadership and management are good overall with a strong culture of collaboration and commitment to continuing professional development embedded in the school; the role of the in-school management (ISM) team in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum has not yet been fully realised.
- Teaching and learning are good overall with teachers utilising a broad range of teaching methodologies to successfully elicit high levels of pupil engagement.
- Pupils' achievements in Mathematics are very good and their outcomes in English are good; their communication skills in Irish are underdeveloped and there is a lack of breadth and balance in their experiences in History.
- School planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) are of good quality.
- Care for pupils' wellbeing and the promotion of pupils' leadership capacities are very good.
- The quality of support for pupils is commendable with high levels of commitment to inclusion; in a small number of instances, special education provision was not sufficiently aligned with the pupils' priority learning needs.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The principal and ISM team should further develop systems and procedures that facilitate the continuous monitoring of curriculum implementation on a whole-school basis.

- There is a need to implement a structured and systematic approach for the teaching of Irish so as to ensure appropriate continuity and development in the pupils' speaking skills as they progress from one class level to the next.
- Teaching and learning in History should provide for greater breadth and balance across the curriculum, with additional emphasis on pupils' skills development.
- Teachers in mainstream classes and special education settings should make greater use of the analysis of assessment data and diagnostic testing, where relevant, to ensure that programmes of work consistently address the pupils' priority learning needs.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is good. The board of management has developed the school infrastructure to a very high standard. It displays a strong sense of dedication to the creation of an inclusive school culture and is very committed to promoting the wellbeing of pupils and teachers. The board is highly commended for its ongoing support of teachers' professional development.
- The principal demonstrates very good organisational and leadership skills and espouses a clear vision for school improvement. He is ably supported by an ISM team comprising of a deputy principal and four assistant principals with a strong culture of collaboration evident. The ISM team undertakes a broad range of duties diligently and it has led a number of initiatives successfully. The potential of the team's role in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum has not yet been fully realised. The principal and ISM team should further develop systems and procedures that facilitate the continuous monitoring of curriculum implementation on a whole-school basis.
- Home-school communication is very good; a purposeful sense of community and school identity permeates the varied aspects of school life. Meaningful procedures are in place that enable open dialogue with parents including their involvement in the formulation of relevant policies. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, all teachers and almost all parents agreed that they were very satisfied with management, discipline and pupil welfare in the school.
- During the evaluation, very effective management of pupils was observed. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all pupils agreed that there are clear rules against hurting others.
- The school provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

### **2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The overall quality of school planning and SSE is good. Organisational plans are of very good quality; their effectiveness is evident in the highly efficient day-to-day running of the school. It is commendable that a strategic plan has been developed in line with evolving priorities and the vision of the school community.
- Whole-school curriculum planning is of good quality. Teachers' collective practice in planning explicitly for the development of pupils' vocabulary in English and Mathematics is a noteworthy strength. In a small number of instances, curriculum plans are aligned to text book content rather than the curriculum and they do not adequately support the incremental

development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across the various curricular strands. The content of curriculum plans should be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriately aligned with the teaching approaches and learning content of the *Primary School Curriculum*.

- A culture of collaboration and improvement has been nurtured through the school's purposeful engagement in the SSE process focusing on aspects of literacy, numeracy and well-being. It is evident that many of the agreed actions in these areas are impacting positively on teachers' classroom practice and pupils' learning experiences. There is need to develop measurable targets in the school improvement plan so that the impact and effectiveness of the SSE process on pupils' learning outcomes can be monitored and evaluated.
- Teachers' professional collaborative discussions and their willingness to share their practice adds richness to their general preparedness for lessons. Their individual short-term curriculum planning should make greater provision for differentiated learning outcomes and the enhanced development of pupils' skills during lessons.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT**

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good overall. Playful approaches to learning in infant classes have been introduced to very good effect. In the majority of lessons observed, teachers utilised a broad range of teaching approaches to elicit high levels of pupil engagement. Where best practice was observed, teachers made very effective use of incidental learning opportunities and they facilitated purposeful, active and collaborative learning. In a small number of lessons where practice was less than satisfactory, the teaching provision did not meet the full range of pupils' abilities and the subsequent learning was fair. Whole-school emphasis on pupils' use of non-reusable workbooks should be considerably reduced with a view to making increased provision for active and engaging learning experiences.
- During a meeting with the parents' association, representatives indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that teaching was good in the school and almost all pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Teaching and learning in English are of good quality with commendable improvements evident in pupils' attainments in recent years. Teachers' collective focus on oral language is successfully supporting pupils to acquire a broader repertoire of vocabulary. The pupils' phonological skills are very good. They write competently in a broad range of genres. Teachers provide pupils with valuable formative feedback; this is having a very effective impact on many aspects of pupils' writing. While reading is well promoted in the school, the range and quantity of reading material in classroom libraries requires improvement and pupils would benefit from additional opportunities to engage in digital literacy experiences at an appropriate instructional level. The school's approach to cyclical in-class support for reading is a key strategy in catering for pupils' differentiated needs. In order to cater more effectively for pupils' varying needs in spelling, teachers should provide pupils with appropriately differentiated experiences.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go cumasach. Cuirtear béim chuí ar rannta agus ar amhráin tríd an scoil. Úsáideann an chuid is mó de na múinteoirí an Ghaeilge go maith mar straitéis bainistíochta ranga. I bhformhór na ceachtanna a breathnaíodh, bhí múineadh na struchtúir teanga go maith ach ní raibh scileanna teanga na ndaltaí ag caighdeán cuí i mionlach de na seomraí ranga. I líon beag cásanna, ní raibh dóthain deiseanna ag na daltaí a gcuid scileanna cumarsáide a chleachtadh le linn na ceachtanna. Tá gá le cur chuige struchtúrtha, agus córasach, a chur i bhfeidhim do

mhúineadh na Gaeilge ionas go mbeidh leanúnachas cuí agus forbairt i scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí mar a ghluaiseann said ó rang go rang. *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory. Pupils' listening skills are developed competently. Suitable emphasis is placed on rhymes and songs throughout the school. Most teachers use Irish well as a classroom management strategy. In the majority of lessons observed, the teaching of language structures was good but pupils' language skills were not at an appropriate standard in a minority of classrooms. In a small number of instances, the pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to practise their communication skills during lessons. There is a need to implement a structured and systematic approach for the teaching of Irish so as to ensure appropriate continuity and development in the pupils' speaking skills as they progress from one class level to the next.*

- Teaching, learning and pupil attainment in Mathematics are very good. All teachers promote pupils' use and understanding of mathematical language very effectively. The teachers explain new concepts clearly and they provide pupils with varied opportunities to explain, justify and discuss their answers. The pupils have developed positive attitudes and dispositions towards Mathematics; they enjoy using concrete materials and they demonstrate very high levels of motivation and engagement during purposeful collaborative learning activities. Observed in-class interventions were highly effective in meeting the pupils' range of abilities. Given that a significant minority of pupils have very high levels of ability in Mathematics, it is advised that more challenging learning experiences be provided for these pupils during all lessons to further promote their higher-order thinking skills.
- Teaching and learning in History are good. Teachers and leaders have established strong links with the local museum to promote pupils' appreciation of History. In a few instances, pupils' understanding of the evolution of technology was of very high quality and teachers' integration of lesson content with Visual Arts was highly commendable. Pupils make some effective use of digital technology to research and create projects and presentations of work. Most of the lessons observed were well-facilitated by teachers with skilful questioning and appropriate emphasis on pupils' acquisition of knowledge and facts. In a minority of the lessons observed, there was an overreliance on textbooks to support teaching and learning with insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as historians. There is need to ensure greater breadth and balance across the school's provision in History, with additional emphasis on pupils' skill development.
- The quality of assessment is good. While the school has gathered a considerable amount of assessment data, the analysis and monitoring of pupils' attainments requires improvement to more effectively inform the continuous planning and implementation of suitably differentiated learning programmes for pupils. Some very effective use of assessment-for-learning strategies was noted across the school, including pupil self-assessment and teachers' assessment of infant pupils' development of learning dispositions through their engagement in play.

#### **4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS**

- The overall quality of support for pupils is commendable. The school's ethos is reflected in its inclusive and enabling culture which recognises and affirms pupils' strengths. The quality of care for pupils' well-being is very good. A broad range of very effective strategies is in place to promote pupils' social, emotional and physical well-being.
- Teaching and learning in the newly-established special class for pupils with ASD is of a high standard with suitable plans in place to further promote integration. Interactions between teachers and pupils with ASD in mainstream and special education settings are very skilful.

- The *Continuum of Support* is implemented in the school in a systematic manner. In a minority of instances, targets outlined for pupils in support plans should be more specific and measurable to support teachers in monitoring pupils' progress in learning.
- Learning environments are very well presented; the teachers display and celebrate the pupils' achievements. Observed interactions between teachers and pupils were very positive and respectful. All teachers successfully elicit pupils' understanding during lessons and they place worthwhile emphasis on the provision of active learning experiences. In a small number of the lessons observed, special education provision was not sufficiently aligned to the pupils' priority learning needs. Teachers in mainstream classes and special education settings should make greater use of the analysis of assessment data and diagnostic testing, where relevant, to ensure that programmes of work consistently address the pupils' priority learning needs.
- The promotion and facilitation of the development of pupils' leadership capacities and their engagement in relevant decision-making roles is praiseworthy.

# **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 Saint Clare's National School is very encouraged by the affirmation offered in the various areas of the WSE report.

The board is very pleased that our inclusive school culture, underpinned by a clear and organised management structure, permeates the varied aspects of school life.

Notable recognition in pupil attainment in Mathematics and English, with playful approaches to learning in the infant classes was highlighted.

The board is pleased that the efforts of staff to create an active learning environment using an array of teaching approaches was credited.

School work on pupil well-being through SSE received special note. The board agrees that pupils' leadership capacities and their input to decision-making in the school is praiseworthy.

### **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 various recommendations made in this report and will ensure that a plan of action is implemented to address the areas mentioned.

The board will facilitate our ISM team to observe and monitor various curricular areas. The use of monthly progress reports and professional dialogue will ensure that all areas of the various curricular subjects are adequately addressed.

The board, in consultation with staff and parents, will look at our whole-school approach to the teaching of communication skills in Irish. The board is anxious that opportunities for our pupils to converse informally in Irish are implemented.

The board will further support, through continuing professional development and professional dialogue, our special education teaching department with the setting of targets to align with the pupils' learning needs.

The board will review and update our whole-school plan for History to ensure all areas addressed are aligned with the Curriculum.

## 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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;