

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

**Whole School Evaluation**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School Name</b>	Scoil Mhuire N S
<b>Seoladh na scoile/ School Address</b>	Newtownforbes Co. Longford
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	19987J

**Date of inspection: 05-12-2019**



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Department of  
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## **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 inspector(s) 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; a response was not received from the board.

## **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>	05-12-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with principal</li><li>• Meeting with the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Meeting with in-school management team</li><li>• Meeting with the SEN team</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to senior management team and teachers,</li><li>• Feedback to board of management and parent representative</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational school located in Newtownforbes, County Longford. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. The school is led by a recently appointed principal. It has fifteen mainstream class teachers. Five special education teachers (SET), one of whom is shared with other schools, provide additional supports for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). There were 363 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation. The attendance levels of the majority of pupils are very good. While there are established procedures to monitor attendance, more robust structures need to be put in place to improve the attendance of a significant minority of pupils for whom attendance is poor. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Music was evaluated in a sample of settings during this whole-school evaluation

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) is good, although in some instances, target-setting lacks clarity and measurability.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning, including the teaching of pupils with SEN, is very good.
- Pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy is very good: there is scope to improve pupils' oral Irish competencies.
- Support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school.
- The capacity for school improvement is very strong.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sa Ghaeilge moltar do na múinteoirí níos mó béime a chur ar chothú cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí trí deiseanna éagsúla a sholáthair dóibh an teanga a úsáid le linn na gceachtanna. *In Irish, teachers are advised to place a greater emphasis on developing pupils' ability to communicate by providing them with a variety of opportunities to use the language during lessons.*
- In seeking improvement in learner outcomes, teachers should ensure that when setting targets, both the targets and the associated actions are clearly defined, measurable and based on priority needs.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is very good. The board of management has a clear understanding of its role and adheres to principles of good governance while discharging its financial, legislative and leadership duties very effectively. Board members are very focused on the needs of the school and supportive of the principal and school staff. The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. The board, together with the parents' association, has made significant investment in the provision of resources to support teaching and learning. In light of Circular 0013/2017, the board should review and revise its admissions policy to better reflect the inclusive nature of the school.
- Management and leadership within the school are of a very high quality. The principal is ably assisted by the deputy principal and the in-school management team who attend to a wide range of duties. They meet regularly and work collaboratively to create an effective learning environment.
- The quality of management of pupils is highly commendable. Respectful and positive interactions were observed in all settings throughout the evaluation. Pupils are highly motivated and work cooperatively with staff. In response to the Inspectorate's questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation, all pupils indicated that they like this school. Pupils' voice is nurtured and promoted through the Green School and Amber Flag Committees and an active Students' Council.
- The parents' association provides valuable support to the school. In Inspectorate questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, almost all parents indicate that the school is well run, that their children enjoy school and that overall they are happy with the school.
- 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 *Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*, as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, pupils and the teacher education institute.

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

- The quality of school planning and SSE is good. A broad range of administrative and organisational policies is available to support the management of the school. All teachers prepare comprehensive planning to guide their work in the classroom. Effective collaborative teacher planning was evident in many settings. Commendably, the teaching staff works collaboratively to review whole-school plans. However, further refinement of this process is necessary. To assist with this process, school management should begin by drawing up a cyclical plan to review school policies. Following from this, as curricular plans are reviewed and updated, each plan should reflect current school practice and should include explicit guidance on appropriate content and skills for each class level, ensuring the progression of learning.

- Structures within the school facilitate the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation with specific areas identified for improvement. School improvement plans have impacted positively on teachers' practice and on learner outcomes, particularly in the areas of problem-solving and writing genres. The current focus for improvement is on Music and spelling. Those leading the SSE process need to ensure that both the targets and the associated actions are clearly defined and provide specific guidance for all class teachers.

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

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers deliver high quality instruction and communicate clearly with pupils. Pupils demonstrate commendable levels of interest and participation in learning and can work both independently and collaboratively. Play-based and active learning methodologies are a consistent feature of practice. Learner experiences and outcomes are rich and varied, with work appropriately differentiated and matched to the individual needs of the pupils. Co-operative and active learning approaches are further supported through the comprehensive use of digital technologies in some settings. Classrooms are designed to support teaching and learning and pupils' work is celebrated. The quality of teaching is further enhanced by the commitment of teachers to continuous professional development. Given the exemplary teaching observed in some settings, whole-school structures should ensure that skilled teachers share expertise and pedagogical practices that have proven particularly successful at improving learning.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. Pupils' early literacy and oral language skills are well developed. Most pupils read fluently, with good expression and understanding. Comprehension skills are developed, with challenging and higher-order questioning in evidence in all settings. Pupils write for a variety of audiences, with opportunities created for emergent writers to explore writing in a purposeful manner. Writing genres are taught across the school and, in senior classes, pupils draft and edit their work. While some good quality penmanship and presentation of work was in evidence, a whole-school approach to the development of handwriting should inform classroom practice.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Stimulating, well-resourced learning environments provide for the development of pupils' mathematical skills. Teachers use concrete resources and place a strong emphasis on the teaching and use of mathematical language to teach and consolidate mathematical concepts. Pupils engage in a range of mathematical activities, recalling facts, explaining definitions and using estimation strategies purposefully. Pupils integrate and connect different aspects of their learning in Mathematics, developing their mathematical thinking. Strategies have been developed to support pupils' problem-solving skills. They can explain strategies they employ to solve problems, though there is scope to engage in more enquiry-based learning where pupils are challenged to justify, argue and present their mathematical findings and opinions.

- Tá cáilíocht foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán. Léiríonn an chuid is mó de na daltaí cumas maith i dtuiscint na Gaeilge. Tá na daltaí in ann ceisteanna a chumadh agus a fhreagairt, ach téann sé dian orthu, comhrá a bheith acu go nádúrtha. Múintear foclóir Gaeilge go cruinn ach níl go leor deiseanna ag na daltaí an Ghaeilge a úsáid go rialta, áfach. Ba chóir deiseanna a chothú agus a thabhairt do dhaltaí gach lá, an foclóir nua agus an Ghaeilge atá acu a chleachtadh agus a úsáid i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla le béim ar leith ar chumarsáid. Déanann na daltaí aithris chuí ar rainn agus filíocht. Tugtar deiseanna do na daltaí téascleabhar a léamh agus a scileanna scríbhneoireachta fheidhmiúla a fhorbairt sna méan agus sna hardranganna. Moltar nasc níos soiléire a dhéanamh idir theanga ó bhéal, ábhair léitheoireachta agus ábhair scríbhneoireachta. B'fhiú saorscríbhneoireacht a chothú a thuilleadh sna seanraí éagsúla chomh maith. Tá gá fíorleabhair agus ábhair léitheoireachta Gaeilge sa bhreis a chur ar fáil. B'fhiú, chomh maith, scrúdaithe caighdeánaithe a úsáid chun caighdeán agus dul chun cinn na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a mheas ar bhonn scoile-uile.
- *The quality of pupils' learning in Irish is good overall. Most pupils demonstrate a good ability to understand the Irish language. Pupils are able to ask and answer questions in Irish, though they find it difficult to sustain conversation naturally. Vocabulary is taught accurately, although pupils do not have enough opportunities to use Irish regularly. Opportunities should be created and provide for pupils to use new vocabulary and practise their Irish daily in different contexts, with particular emphasis on communication. Pupils recite a range of poetry and rhymes. Opportunities are created in the middle and senior classes to read from textbooks and develop functional writing skills. It is recommended that clearer links be made between oral language and reading and writing material. It would also be worthwhile to further develop free writing through the use of the writing genres. There is a need to provide a wider variety of Irish language reading material and books. It would also be worthwhile using standardised tests to assess the standard and progression of the pupils in Irish throughout the school.*
- The overall quality of teaching in Music is good. Pupils demonstrate high levels of enjoyment and engagement in their music learning. Pupils in all classes have learned a range of songs in both English and Irish. Active listening skills are well developed and pupils respond to Music in a variety of ways, including through talk and discussion, movement and art activities. The enjoyment of Music is promoted and pupils have opportunities to perform to a range of audiences. In some settings, pupils display a very good understanding of the language of Music and terms for musical concepts. While graphic notation was observed in some classes, the development of musical literacy should be documented in the whole-school plan. The school reports that the tin whistle is taught. Teaching the tin whistle consistently throughout the school year, using the staff and notation, would ensure a consistent approach to the development of musical literacy.
- The overall quality of assessment is good. A wide range of assessment practices, including teacher observations, teacher designed tasks and tests to monitor and record individual pupil progress were in use. Pupils' work is regularly monitored and corrected with formative feedback provided in most settings. Pupils engage in self and peer assessment with some teachers using ICT very effectively to facilitate prompt feedback. Teachers should ensure that assessment records are easy to interpret and share and are used to inform classroom practice.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength of the school. Teachers have developed and maintain strong links with external agencies to support pupils' social and emotional needs. There are structures in place to ensure smooth transitions to and from primary school.
- The quality of provision for pupils with additional needs is very good. Pupils with SEN are supported through a combination of in-class support and withdrawal. The practice of identifying and prioritising needs through the use of the continuum of support is well developed. In some instances, there is scope to ensure that the targets set are clearly aligned to identified priority needs and that learning targets are sufficiently measurable. Innovation and creativity in teaching and learning to support pupils' academic, social and emotional development is a feature of current practice, which is proving successful at improving learning outcomes and experiences for many pupils with SEN.

## 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;