Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name | Crossmolina National School
---|---
Seoladh na scoile / School address | Crossmolina
| County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 20125I

Date of inspection: 27-04-2018
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.
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, Well-being).
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>27-04-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>27-04-2018</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</td>
<td>• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires</td>
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<td>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>• Meeting with parent representatives</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with teachers</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</td>
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**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Crossmolina NS is a co-educational primary school situated in the town of Crossmolina, County Mayo. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school has seven mainstream teaching posts and an administrative principal. There are also five special education teaching posts (SETs) of which two are deployed exclusively or almost exclusively in other schools as part of a local arrangement. There were 207 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation and overall school attendance levels are highly commendable.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**

- The quality of pupils’ learning is commendable overall.
- The quality of teaching is good, with elements of exemplary practice observed in some mainstream classes and some special education withdrawal settings; there are opportunities to improve the teaching and learning of Irish.
- Support for pupils’ well-being is of a very high standard.
- The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, with urgent action required to improve the management of assessment, special education, teacher allocation, and class size.
- The school has engaged effectively with school self-evaluation (SSE).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teaching resources that have been allocated to the school to support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) should be used in their entirety to support pupils identified with SEN, in line with best practice, and as required under Circular No 0013/2017.
- Sa Ghaeilge, ba chóir feabhas a chur ar thorthaí agus eispéiris na bhfoghlaimeoirí, agus ba chóir úsáid a bhaint as modheolaíochtaí níos éifeachtaí teagaisc go bhonn uile scoile. In Irish, learner outcomes and learner experiences should be improved and more effective teaching methodologies should be used across the school.
- Assessment data should be analysed carefully and used more effectively to inform teaching, to guide programme planning, and to improve in-class support and differentiation; greater use should also be made of assessment for learning (AFL) and pupil self-assessment.
- SETs and mainstream teachers should work in partnership to ensure that a greater range of purposeful, in-class teaching approaches is used.
- The imbalance between the smallest and largest class size should be addressed to ensure pupils are more evenly distributed across all classes.
1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils’ learning is commendable overall. A wide range of learning activities is provided and pupils are enabled to develop age-appropriate attitudes to learning across a balanced range of curricular and co-curricular areas. Pupil learning is enhanced through a focus on transferring and applying skills developed across different contexts.

- Learning outcomes in numeracy and English literacy are generally in line with realistic expectations. During the evaluation, most pupils achieved the intended learning objectives of the lessons observed. Consideration should now be given to how provision can be further differentiated and a greater level of challenge be provided to enhance learner experiences in some settings.

- Ní mór feabhas a chur ar thorthaí agus eispéiris na bhfoghlaiméireoirí sa Ghaeilge. Cé go bhfuil foclóir aonair ag na daltaí ar na topaí a chaith gach suíomh, ní cheart a gcumas a chumadh go leanúnach ag úsáid réimse bhiúla. Ba chóir pleán a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn uile scoile chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt céim ar chéim. Learner outcomes and experiences require improvement in Irish. Although pupils know discrete vocabulary on the various topics, they are not enabled to tell short stories or compose continuous descriptions using a range of verbs. A whole-school plan should be implemented to develop pupil communication skills incrementally.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is commendable overall, with elements of exemplary practice observed in some mainstream classes and in some SET withdrawal settings. All teachers display highly effective classroom management skills. Interactions between pupils and teachers are characterised by mutual respect, positive support and fairness. Teaching is enhanced through the creation of print-rich learning environments, the display of samples of pupil work across a variety of curriculum areas, and the availability of a plentiful supply of resources and concrete materials to support teaching and learning.

- Where exemplary practice was noted in the lessons observed, it was characterised by a sharing of the intended learning outcomes with pupils, the provision of activity-based, experiential learning tasks differentiated in line with pupil ability and prior learning, and communication of high expectations to pupils. There is scope to extend these very high quality approaches to teaching across the school.

- The quality of teaching in almost all withdrawal settings is of a very high standard. In these settings, practice is informed by careful long-term and short-term planning; specific and measurable targets are set for pupils with SEN, as appropriate, achievement of targets is tracked regularly, and learning is scaffolded and reinforced. Provision in all withdrawal settings should be guided by this very good practice.

- In-class support for pupils with SEN requires review and improvement. More focused collaborative teaching is required, and models of support and interventions should be better informed by assessment data.

- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Very good use is made of teacher-designed tests and tasks to assess pupils’ grasp of content in some curriculum areas. Standardised tests in Irish, English and Mathematics are carried out annually, together with a range of screening and diagnostics tests. However, better analysis of this data is required and the information gathered should be used more effectively to inform teaching, to guide
programme planning, in-class support and differentiation. Better use should also be made of checklists, AfL approaches and pupil self-assessment.

3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS’ WELL-BEING
   - The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is very good. There is a strong emphasis on enabling pupils to develop positive attitudes to physical fitness, healthy eating, and social justice. The holistic development of pupils is fostered through their involvement in a broad range of sporting and musical events, community activities, and events hosted by the very active parents’ association.
   - Pupil behaviour during the evaluation was exemplary and it is evident that they are enabled to grow as learners through respectful interactions and supportive experiences. In questionnaires, almost all pupils and parents indicated very positive attitudes towards the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
   - The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.
   - The board of management is properly constituted, meets regularly and provides very effectively for the maintenance and upkeep of the school. Effective communication is maintained with the parent body and the parents’ association. The current growth in pupil numbers presents a particular challenge for the board, and requires more pro-active management.
   - In her work, the principal demonstrates very good interpersonal skills and fosters collaboration and mutual support very effectively among staff. She has led a comprehensive review of a large number of policy documents and curriculum plans since her appointment in 2016. The instructional leadership aspects of the principal’s role should now be strengthened, particularly in relation to leading change in teaching and learning in Irish and in the leadership of special education. Significant change is also required in the management of class size. There is an unsatisfactory imbalance across classes, with numbers ranging from twenty pupils in one classroom to thirty-seven in another.
   - Action is required as a matter of priority to improve the management of the teaching resources provided to the school to support pupils with SEN. The deployment of a SET teacher to a mainstream class until lunchtime each day limits the ability of the school to provide adequately for the full range of pupils’ needs and it impacts on the school’s use of collaborative, in-class support teaching. It contravenes Circular No 0013/2017, Special Education Teaching Allocation, which stipulates that teaching resources under this model cannot be used for mainstream class teaching. The school should take immediate steps to ensure that the additional SEN teaching supports are used in their entirety to support pupils identified with special educational needs.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION
   - The school has engaged well with SSE and actions for improvement have been identified, particularly in specific aspects of literacy. To build upon existing practice, specific improvement targets should be identified, and progress towards their achievement should be monitored and recorded within the school’s improvement planning process. The school should also consider how to strengthen the role of parents and the board of management in the SSE process.
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 acknowledges the report of the Inspectorate. We welcome the affirmation of good teaching with elements of exemplary practice in our school and affirmation of the highly effective classroom management skills displayed by all teachers. We are conscious as a board that the past eighteen months has been a time of unprecedented change in our school community. We embrace change and all the positives it can bring.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- We have now put systems in place where teaching resources that have been allocated to the school to support pupils with SEN are used for that purpose, implementing fully Circular 0013/2017. The board welcomes the finding that the school’s support for pupils’ wellbeing is of a very high standard.

- The principal and staff had already targeted Gaeilge Neamhfhoirimiúil as a priority and have already begun the groundwork for devising an appropriate set of initiatives.

- Whilst the Inspectorate has acknowledged the quality of assessment as satisfactory in our school, we are now, as recommended, carrying out more careful analysis of this data.

- The requirement to improve teacher allocation and class size is a work in progress, with the caveat to date being that change must be rolled out gradually so as to allow for the best possible mix and reflecting the best options for all our pupils. With this in mind, classes have been divided for the coming year to address the unsatisfactory imbalance across classes, as recommended by the Inspectorate. Mainstream teachers and SETs for the coming year have been allocated and look forward to working together and extending the very high quality approaches to teaching observed by the Inspectorate.

- We reiterate our commitment to SSE and are building on existing practice.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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