

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

**Whole School Evaluation**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School Name</b>	Griffeen Valley Educate Together NS
<b>Seoladh na scoile/ School Address</b>	Griffeen Glen Boulevard Lucan Co. Dublin
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	20166W

**Date of inspection: 16-10-2019**



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agus Scileanna**  
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 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 did not meet the requirements in relation to check 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken

## Whole-School Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	16-10-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with principal and deputy principal</li><li>• Meeting with the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</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 parent representatives</li><li>• Feedback to board of management</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Griffen Valley Educate Together NS, situated in Lucan, County Dublin, is a co-educational, multi-denominational primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. Staffing comprises an acting principal, twenty-one mainstream teachers and eight special education teachers (SET) as well as additional hours provided by a SET teacher not based in the school. The school building is undergoing substantial remediation work and the staff and board are working cohesively to limit its impact on pupils and ensure their safety and wellbeing. Attendance levels are very good overall.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The acting principal communicates a clear vision for the school, promotes staff wellbeing in a spirit of mutual respect and trust, and, with the support of her leadership and management team, is well placed to lead improvements in teaching and learning.
- The board of management meets regularly and is responsive to the school's ongoing needs; there is scope for development regarding the work of the board in relation to the management of school finances, policy work and strategic planning.
- This welcoming school ensures that the care and wellbeing of the pupils is central to its work; there are aspects for development in how supports for pupils with special educational needs are planned for and delivered.
- The pupils display very good levels of application to their learning tasks; their learning experiences are not sufficiently broad and challenging.
- Teachers enable pupils to talk and discuss during lessons and their opinions are affirmed, nevertheless there is scope for greater development and progression in the pupils' oral language skills, both in Irish and English.
- Whole-school planning and assessment practices, and school self-evaluation (SSE) do not sufficiently inform teaching and learning across the school.
- The school did not meet the requirements in relation to check seven regarding its child protection procedures and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that the board prioritise training to assist it in fulfilling its management roles and ensure that all outstanding school accounts be certified, as a priority.
- The school should enhance its current structures, processes and whole-school guidance in order to address the priority needs of the school, guide curriculum provision and ensure consistency of practice.
- The pupils should be provided with more activity-based, challenging learning experiences whereby they are enabled to work collaboratively and transfer and apply skills from one context to another.
- All teachers should use a wider range of language-learning methodologies, drawing from the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC), and plan specific language programmes to ensure progression in the pupils' communication skills in both English and Irish.
- The school should ensure that a wide range of assessment approaches is used to evaluate learning, to inform differentiation and to ensure that the pupils' identified learning needs are comprehensively met through the Continuum of Support Framework.
- The school should put in place measures to ensure it is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum for Child Protection.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- The overall quality of school leadership and management, comprising the board, principal and leadership and management team, is satisfactory. The board meets very frequently to address issues such as school-building remediation and staffing. School governance in relation to the management of school finances, policy work and strategic planning has scope for development. It is recommended that the board prioritise training to assist it in fulfilling its management roles and it should ensure that all outstanding school accounts be certified as a priority.
- The recently appointed acting principal communicates a strong vision for the school. She is knowledgeable about pedagogy and demonstrates good capacity for leading learning. She nurtures positive relationships with the school community and promotes staff wellbeing in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. In the teacher questionnaires, teachers agreed that there is a good atmosphere and that the school is well run. The in-school leadership and management team is supportive of the principal, and together they work towards identifying and responding to the school's ongoing needs. Their roles should be reviewed to enable them to lead and monitor improvements in teaching and learning in priority areas to a greater extent. To this end, the school should enhance its current structures and processes to facilitate professional conversations and assist decision-making.

- The management of resources is good. The school is well equipped and has an excellent library and a sensory room. For the most part, teachers use a variety of teaching resources and prepare stimulating educational classroom environments which are print-rich and well laid out. Pupils' work is celebrated throughout the school. The use of digital technologies by pupils is not a regular feature of practice, however.
- Mentoring and induction practices are well established. 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.
- This welcoming school fosters good relations and communications with the community. Effective strategies are in place to inform parents regarding their children's education. Parental involvement is promoted through their support in school-based and extra-curricular activities. The parent-teacher association is very supportive and hosts a range of events for the school. In the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents agreed that there is a good atmosphere, the school is well-run and they are happy with the school. Good links are established with local schools, both primary and post-primary.
- The management of pupils is commendable. There are very supportive and respectful interactions between teachers and pupils. Teachers value and affirm pupils' opinions. The pupils are well behaved and courteous. In the Inspectorate survey, almost all pupils agreed that their teacher listens to them, that they are treated fairly and respectfully, and that they like their school. The pupils' responses also indicate areas for development regarding pupil voice, use of group work and digital technologies.

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

- The overall quality of school planning and the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is satisfactory. School leadership is currently engaging in focused strategic planning and embarking on a new SSE cycle. The impact of previous SSE plans is not evident. Curricular plans and organisational policies are in place, but many are now in need of updating as they do not sufficiently inform procedures or guide best practice in teaching and learning. A phased approach to the review and development of school planning should be adopted and specific oversight measures put in place to support implementation.
- All teachers prepare long-term and short-term plans. Where there was effective planning, teachers identified learning objectives which were clear, progressive, informed by the curriculum and based on individual pupils' needs. Less effective practice reflected an over-reliance on textbooks for programme planning and delivery. Planning by special education teachers should be on a weekly basis.

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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is appropriate although some possibilities for improvement exists. The teachers are effective communicators, explain new concepts well and use suitable resources. The school makes good provision for play-based learning in the infant classes. Pupils are attentive and display good levels of application. Lessons are primarily teacher-directed. For the most part, the pupils' learning experiences do not provide sufficient levels of challenge or stimulation for pupils to meet their abilities and needs. In this regard, the extensive use of textbooks and workbooks should be reviewed. It is recommended that teachers widen and enrich the range of pupils' learning experiences with a greater emphasis on transferable skills, collaborative work and inquiry-based learning.
- The overall standard of English is satisfactory. The school is in the initial stages of implementing the Primary Language Curriculum. The pupils' early-reading skills are well developed. The good practice of junior pupils reading books which are matched to their ability levels merits extension. Across the school, the pupils recite a wide range of poetry with enjoyment. The pupils' writing experiences have scope to be broadened in terms of purpose and audience, and there is a need for a whole-school approach to penmanship and presentation of work to improve standards in this area. Pupils are enabled to contribute to class discussions and their efforts are valued. There is a need to develop the pupils' oral language skills in a more incremental, progressive manner, with particular focus on pupils for whom English is not their first language.
- Sa Ghaeilge, ní mór feabhas a dhéanamh maidir le torthaí agus eispéiris na bhfoghlaimeoirí. Baineann na hoidí úsáid as áiseanna oiriúnacha agus as dánta, cluichí agus rainn i rith na gceachtanna. Ar an iomlán, cuireann na hoidí béim chuí ar obair bheirte. Moltar achar níos faide a chaitheamh ar mhúineadh agus athmhúineadh na n-eiseamláirí nua agus níos mó deiseanna cainte a thabhairt do na daltaí chun fíorchumarsáid a chothú. Chun cur le sealbhú scileanna teanga na ndaltaí, moltar tuilleadh naisc a chruthú idir an obair ó bhéal agus tascanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta cruthaithí.
- *There is scope for improvement with regard to pupils' learning outcomes and experiences in Irish. The teachers use appropriate resources as well as poems, games and rhymes during lessons. For the most part, teachers place suitable emphasis on pair work. It is recommended that more time be spent on the explicit teaching and consolidation of new language exemplars and more opportunities should be provided for pupils to communicate naturally. It is advised that further links be made between oral, reading and writing tasks to support language acquisition for pupils.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Teaching is characterised by clear explanation of concepts, language focus, teacher-modelling, the use of concrete resources and active learning. The pupils achieve good standards, particularly in the strand of *Number*. They can compute with confidence and can apply their knowledge of mathematical operations to problems. To further develop the pupils' reasoning skills, teachers should ensure that all

Mathematics relates to the pupils' everyday lives and provide extended opportunities for pupils to share and justify their approaches to solving problems.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is good. In the lessons observed, most teachers capably used a variety of approaches and resources including evidence, artefacts, photographs, maps and story to support learning. The emphasis on oral history to reinforce the concept of time and chronology is commended. In most lessons observed, pupils were enabled to work as historians and were facilitated in developing skills such as understanding change and continuity, using evidence and developing empathy. Programmes of learning should be extended beyond the content of textbooks to include more emphasis on local history and on research and collaborative methods of learning.
- The overall quality of assessment has scope for development. All teachers maintain assessment records and work samples, and correct pupils' written work. Standardised tests are administered annually. Overall, a narrow range of assessment approaches is in use. Insufficient analysis is undertaken at whole-school and individual-teacher level to determine the appropriate starting points for programmes of learning, and to assess the extent of pupils' progress. It is recommended that teachers expand the range of assessment approaches in use and that whole-school guidance be provided in relation to the range, analysis and use of assessment.

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

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The Continuum of Support Framework is at an early stage of embedding in school practice. Special education teachers establish a warm rapport with pupils. They prepare attractive environments and ensure good communication with staff, parents and external agencies. Special needs assistants are attentive to pupils' care needs. The setting of targets has scope to be further developed to maximise the impact of support programmes. It is recommended that greater coordination be provided for the delivery of all supports, both in-class and withdrawal, including support at the first level of the continuum delivered by class teachers. This coordination should focus on the extended use of diagnostic assessments, target setting, and the planning and review of support plans and programmes of learning.
- Support for the care and wellbeing of pupils is a significant strength of this school. It provides a very good range of additional supports to ensure that all pupils are enabled to participate fully in school life. The school provides initiatives for wellbeing and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), annual themed weeks and a wide range of after-school activities and sports, many provided by teachers on a voluntary basis. The school is working towards re-establishing a combined student council/Green School committee. The school celebrates and affirms pupils' achievements through weekly assemblies and regular awards.

## 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;



# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

In the area of *The Quality of School Leadership and Management* the Board of Management and staff are delighted that the Inspectors observed that the management of pupils is commendable and that there are very supportive and positive interactions between teachers and pupils. We are very pleased that the report acknowledges that the school ensures that the care and wellbeing of pupils is central to its work. We welcome the reports recognition that the school fosters good relations and communications with the school community. Likewise, the Board and staff are delighted that parent and pupil questionnaires reflect a very positive disposition towards the school. The support and involvement of parents and the PTA is a very important aspect of our school culture and is reflected in the questionnaire response that almost all parents agreed the school is well run, there is a good atmosphere and they are happy with the school. The Board also welcomes the Inspectors recognition that the Acting Principal and in- school leadership team are working together towards identifying and responding to the school's ongoing needs.

In the area of *The Quality of School Planning and School Self-Evaluation*, we appreciate the Inspectors evaluation that SSE is a current focus of the school and that a new cycle has been embarked upon. We look forward to being able to demonstrate the impact of this new round of SSE. We are also pleased that Inspectors encountered teacher planning which was "*effective with clear, progressive planning objectives which were informed by the curriculum and based on individual pupil needs.*"

In respect of *The Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement* in our school, we note from the report that the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics and History was described as 'good'. We look forward to "*developing further opportunities for pupils to relate Mathematics to their everyday lives and to extending opportunities for pupils to share and justify their approaches to problem solving.*" We also plan to undertake further development of programmes of learning in History.

Regarding "*The Quality of Supports for our Pupils*" we are very proud that the report notes that "*support for the care and wellbeing of pupils is a significant strength of the school*". We are also happy to see that the Inspectors recognised the "*warm rapport*" established by Special education teachers with their pupils as well as their "*good communication with staff, parents and external agencies*". We are very pleased that the Inspectors noted that, "*Special needs assistants are attentive to pupil's care needs.*" We look forward to further embedding the Continuum of Support Framework in our school and have begun to develop greater co-ordination in the delivery of all supports.

## **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

In relation to the recommendations the school will work towards developing the following areas:

*The Board of Management has prioritised training to assist it in fulfilling its management role.*

- Initial training this area will take place in January 2019.
- RSE training for Board of Management will take place during Spring Term 2020

*The school should enhance its current structures, processes and whole-school guidance in order to address the priority needs of the school, guide curriculum provision and ensure consistency of practice;*

- Prior to Whole School Evaluation the Acting Principal and in-school leadership team had developed a three-year plan for the school which was shared with Inspectors. This plan has been amended to take the recommendations of the WSE into account and has been shared with staff.
- A review of the roles of the in-school leadership team has taken place and this should enable them to further develop leadership and monitor improvements in teaching and learning in priority areas
- Opportunities for the sharing of good practice among teaching staff have been identified and time has been scheduled for professional conversations to take place and assist with decision making. Opportunities for CPD have also been identified and have already commenced at whole school, team and individual levels. Our teachers have always been proactive in seeking out CPD opportunities and now welcome the opportunity to share their learning at team and staff meetings.
- In terms of Digital learning the school has developed a new Digital Learning Plan and has staff have recently undertaken additional IT training which allows them to create opportunities for the use of digital technologies in the classroom.
- The school is reviewing its use of textbooks, teachers are being provided with opportunities to share effective planning practices identified during the inspection to ensure consistency of practice across the school, SET teachers have immediately moved from fortnightly to weekly planning.

*All teachers should use a wider range of language learning methodologies, drawing from the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC), and plan specific language programmes to ensure progression in the pupil's communication skills in both English and Irish.*

- Training for all staff in the use of the PLC, provided and scheduled by the PDST, took place as planned, following the Whole School Evaluation. We have identified opportunities for pupil's writing experiences to be broadened in terms of purpose and audience and explored this in detail during our training. We will continue to develop this area through professional conversations during additional webinar training days and staff meetings.
- A focus on the development of a whole school approach to "active learning" as a methodology across all areas of the Primary School Curriculum will help us to ensure that the children are more active participants in their own learning. Opportunities for pupils to discuss, problem solve and evaluate their own learning will be facilitated by using of more group and pair work in all lessons.

- A focus will be placed on teaching strategies to support EAL learners these will include; the identification the language demands of the PLC for EAL learners, development of oral language learning, making the verbal curriculum more visual and the development of interactive and collaborative teaching and learning. Children will also be encouraged to read and write texts in their home language and to share and value the fantastic linguistic diversity of our school.
- *In relation to penmanship a process of SSE in this area will commence in January with a focus on developing a new school wide programme for handwriting this is being supported by the PDST and is in addition to the SSE Ethos cycle which commenced at the beginning of the school year*

*The school should ensure that a wide range of assessment approaches is used to evaluate learning, to inform differentiation and to ensure that the pupils' identified learning needs are comprehensively met through the Continuum of Support Framework*

- *CPD for staff has been arranged and will focus on the extended use of diagnostic assessments and target setting*
- *Further analysis of standardised test results at individual teacher level is planned and training for staff will take place to ensure that they can confidently utilize the new school data system to access and analyse this information.*
- *We will develop the use of formative assessment, use more detailed and higher order, open questioning to assess children's knowledge and understanding. We will develop the use of mind mapping, portfolios and rubrics to support our pupils in self-assessment and to identify gaps in pupil learning. The use of teacher pupil conferencing, as referenced in recent PLC training, will develop opportunities for teachers and children to progress learning and will be used to inform further planning and differentiation.*

*The school should put in place measures to ensure it is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum for Child Protection*

- A new whole school plan has been developed by staff and will be shared with the new Board and PTA for feedback
- CPD in RSE and Stay Safe has been undertaken by staff with a new leadership role in this area. Feedback has been shared with staff and notes have been shared through the schools OneDrive
- Training for the new BOM and an information session for parents has been organised and will take place shortly
- A clear outline of all lessons to be undertaken at all class levels in this area has been developed in consultation with staff and is shared at regular staff meetings
- A system of checks and balances has been put in place to ensure that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspect of the SPHE curriculum for Child Protection at individual class, year group and whole school levels