

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	Balbriggan Educate Together National School
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Hamlet Lane, Balbriggan, County Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20202A

Date of inspection: 02-05-2019



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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. In this case, the subject was Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) while the school also requested that Physical Education (PE) be included.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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

Date of inspection	02-05-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to senior management team and teachers • Feedback to parent representatives • Feedback to board of management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with principal and deputy principal • Meeting with the board of management • Meeting with senior management team • Meeting with the special education team and the home school community liaison teacher. • Meeting with parent representatives • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview 	

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Balbriggan Educate Together National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of Educate Together and enrolls pupils from junior infants to sixth class. There are 399 pupils enrolled across seventeen mainstream classes. There are eleven full time special education teachers and an additional part-time support position which is shared with another school in the locality. The school participates in Band One of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. As part of its participation in DEIS, the school has the services of a home-school-community-liaison teacher (HSCL). Although attendance levels for most pupils are generally good, poor attendance by a small minority gives cause for concern. The board of management is proactively pursuing a multi-agency approach to address this challenge.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of school leadership and management is exemplary; under the very effective leadership of the principal, the school has been very successful in creating a positive, ordered and stimulating learning environment in which the development of pupil voice and pupil leadership are prioritised.
- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is very good; a clear framework has been devised to guide the development, implementation and monitoring of school policies and plans.
- Teachers' short-term planning clearly identifies new work to be undertaken; however, it is not sufficiently informed by observations of pupils' progress.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good with potential to develop some aspects of assessment practice further.
- Ar an iomlán, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí i nGaeilge sásúil, i roinnt ranganna, níl sé ar chumas na ndaltaí abairtí chruinn a struchtúró go neamhspléach. *The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is satisfactory; in a few classes, pupils are not able to independently structure sentences accurately.*
- The overall quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good; while the needs of pupils requiring additional support are carefully identified, provided for

and reviewed, there is potential for the teachers to share these observations with pupils thereby enhancing pupils' sense that they can develop their learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should develop their practices in continuous assessment and ensure that this informs their short-term planning on an ongoing basis.
- Is gá do na múinteoirí béim sa bhreis a chur ar chumas na ndaltaí chun abairtí chruinne a struchtúráil agus a chur in ord go neamhspléach. *Teachers should place an additional emphasis on pupils' ability to independently structure and order sentences accurately.*
- A more consistent emphasis should be placed on making learning explicit to pupils with SEN during lessons thereby enhancing pupils' learning and their capacity to apply their learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of school leadership and management is exemplary. The board of management works very effectively to support the provision of rich learning experiences for pupils. To this end, the board demonstrates a very clear understanding of its purpose and responsibilities and it works systematically and with commitment to implement its role for optimum impact.
- The principal is an excellent school leader; he has very successfully led the school community in establishing and realising a clear vision and plan for the development of teaching and learning.
- The principal is very ably supported by a committed in-school management team. Together, the principal and in-school management team have created very effective systems for working collaboratively with teachers and all stakeholders to achieve very good quality teaching and learning. A notable dimension to these collaborative systems is the particular attention paid to developing leadership capacity not only within the in-school management team but among teachers generally; the evidence for this can be seen in the many additional initiatives led by teachers and their commitment to exemplifying very high quality standards of teaching in their classrooms.
- In a questionnaire completed by teachers as part of this evaluation, all teachers agree that the school is well-run and the core values of the school are being implemented well in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Pupil leadership has been effectively established through a range of initiatives including the pupils' council and the Green Schools Programme; pupils understand their role as a catalyst for change and very effective structures have been created to assist pupils in achieving very worthwhile outcomes across and beyond the curriculum.
- The school provides placement experience for teachers in initial teacher training and this reflects the school's concept of itself as a professional and learning organisation.

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

- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation in DEIS is very good. A clear framework has been devised to guide the development, implementation and monitoring of school policies and plans. The policies and plans that have been created are of a very good quality and their value is evident in the very effective functioning of the school and the worthwhile and varied learning experiences that are created for pupils.

3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Pupils generally demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of what they have been taught and they demonstrate a very good capacity to explain and apply their learning. A wide range of stimulating and worthwhile learning experiences is provided for pupils and this is integral to the positive, productive learning environments that have been created for pupils throughout the school.
- All teachers visited demonstrated very good teaching skills with the capacity to use a range of teaching strategies to deliver focused, stimulating, well-resourced and well-paced lessons for pupils. All teachers visited demonstrated very effective classroom management skills and

have been very successful in creating respectful and nurturing relationships with pupils. A strong emphasis is placed on teachers working collaboratively and the benefit of this can be seen in teachers' long-term planning and the implementation of very worthwhile learning events such as Féile na Gaeilge (Celebration for Irish), Arts Week and weekly assemblies. It is particularly noteworthy that these assemblies place a strong emphasis on teachers and pupils reflecting on teaching and learning experiences. Teachers' short-term planning, while clear in identifying new learning, is not sufficiently informed by observations of pupils' progress; this should be addressed by teachers in order to optimise learning for pupils.

- Classroom environments present as organised learning spaces for pupils. There is potential in some settings to enhance wall displays to include additional teaching resources such as maps and to further develop other teaching resources such as language walls so that pupils are more involved in the selection, recording and updating of learning arising from these resources.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Pupils demonstrate very good oral language skills particularly in terms of their capacity to listen actively and respectfully, to reflect upon, articulate and respond to class discussion and other points of view. There is potential for teachers to further develop their approach to assessing and maintaining records of oral language development to enhance learning. Pupils are generally attaining very well in reading and the school is effective in identifying and supporting groups of pupils with particular learning needs. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the different writing genres and demonstrate a very good capacity to apply this in their writing. Pupils write regularly on a broad range of interesting topics. Pupils' work is generally well-presented and effectively monitored with evidence that this monitoring is impacting positively on quality. Retaining samples of writing in the different genres across the range of class levels would assist pupils in self-assessing their progress and developing their writing.
- Ta cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go sásúil ar an iomlán, le gnéithe de chleachtais an-mhaith, go háirithe i roinnt cur chuige teagaisc. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh as na ceachtanna agus go soláthraíonn na hoidí ceachtanna atá gníomhach agus suimiúil le béim curtha ar chumarsáid agus meon dearfach a chothú. Is léir freisin go bhfuil an Ghaeilge in úsáid mar theanga bhainistíochta ranga agus chumarsáid theagmhach i mórchuid de sheomraí ranga. I roinnt ceachtanna áfach, níl go leor béime curtha ar fhocail agus ar fhrásaí a mhúineadh go sistéamach chun barr feabhais a bhaint amach san fhoghlaim. I roinnt ranganna, níl sé de nós ag na daltaí abairtí chruinne a struchtúru agus a chur in ord go neamhspléach agus is gá do na hoidí béim sa bhreis a chur ar an scil seo a fhorbairt. Léann na daltaí go rialta agus is inmholta an úsáid a bhaintear as raon de théacsanna. Scríobhann na daltaí Gaeilge fheidhmiúil agus b'fhiú béim sa bhreis a chur ar an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach. Ba chóir go mbeadh na daltaí in ann cur síos ó bhéal a dhéanamh ar ábhar a gcuid scríbhneoireachta cruthaitheach. *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is satisfactory overall with aspects of very good practice particularly in terms of some teaching approaches. It is clear that pupils enjoy their lessons and that teachers deliver active and interesting lessons with an emphasis on communication and cultivating a positive attitude towards Irish. It is clear also that Irish is in use as a language of classroom management and incidental communication in a majority of classrooms. In some lessons, however, there is an insufficient emphasis on the systematic teaching of vocabulary and phrases in order to optimise learning. In some classrooms, pupils are not in the habit of independently structuring and ordering sentences accurately and teachers should place a greater emphasis on developing this skill. Pupils read regularly and the use of a range of texts is commendable. The pupils engage in functional writing and it would be worth increasing the emphasis on creative writing. Pupils should be able to talk about the content of their creative writing.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Pupils are attaining well and there is evidence of teachers effectively identifying and supporting those in need of additional support. Teachers structure lessons effectively with clear objectives, good pacing and a meaningful use of visual and concrete resources to support and consolidate learning. Teachers are also successful in creating a real-life context for lessons and in facilitating pupils to make connections from their mathematical learning across curricular areas. For this reason, there is potential for teachers to further expand the range of enquiry-based learning opportunities in mathematics lessons beyond the textbook. Problem solving is given due emphasis by teachers although there is potential in some settings for further time to be given to discussing and devising problems. Station teaching approaches are used effectively to work with pupils in small groups; on-going plenary sessions during these lessons would enhance learning, particularly for pupils working at independent stations. While teachers are aware of the needs of more able pupils and provide additional learning opportunities for these pupils, there is potential to develop this provision through ensuring that these activities are part of a structured programme guided by appropriately challenging objectives.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in SPHE is very good. Teachers collaborate effectively to deliver all aspects of the SPHE curriculum in a broad and balanced manner within a framework of global citizenship, rights and responsibilities. Teachers are very effective in creating an appropriate learning environment and respectful atmosphere that facilitates thoughtful reflection and meaningful discussion among pupils. All observed lessons were based on appropriately challenging learning objectives and teachers very successfully engaged pupils' interest and participation. Teachers demonstrate a very good capacity to employ a range of teaching methodologies to optimise learning for pupils. During lessons, pupils were observed to ask thought-provoking questions. To enhance the impact of these questions and where lessons are revisiting topics already familiar to pupils, teachers should invite pupils to reflect upon and identify in advance some questions which they would like to ask or observations which they would like to share and these could become the basis of lessons. To enhance lesson impact, pupils should also be invited to note some key learning that resonates particularly for them. The assessment of pupils' progress in SPHE requires further attention by teachers and this could usefully include facilitating pupils to monitor their own progress in SPHE. In a questionnaire completed by fourth and sixth class pupils as part of this evaluation, almost all pupils agree that they feel safe in their classroom and that they have learned about different kinds of bullying. A significant majority of pupils agree that they like this school, that they enjoy their lessons and learning and that they are doing well in reading and Maths.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in PE is very good. Pupils engaged very well in all observed lessons; these lessons were very inclusive, very well-organised and very well structured with appropriately challenging objectives and a clear focus on incremental skill development and individualised support. Effective measures are in place to ensure the full breadth of the PE curriculum is delivered with due regard to continuity and progression. There are examples of teachers using checklists to monitor and record pupil progress; this practice should be developed further with pupils also being facilitated to participate in this monitoring and recording of their own progress. On-going revision of key skills could usefully be incorporated into provision which would assist pupils in seeing their progress over time.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. A very effective system is in place for identifying and supporting pupils with additional learning needs. A notable feature of this system is the provision for communication between the mainstream teachers and support teachers. Careful consideration through the Continuum of Support is given to how best to respond to pupils' needs. While these priority learning needs are identified in teachers' planning the related actions need to be described more specifically in a few instances.
- It is good practice that observational notes are recorded by teachers on an on-going basis and that pupils' progress is reviewed systematically. To enhance learning, there is potential for teachers to share these observations with pupils thereby making learning more explicit; this will enhance pupils' capacity to apply their learning from the support setting to the mainstream setting.
- The work of the HSCL teacher is very effective in enhancing parental involvement in the school and in assisting parents to support their children's learning. In a questionnaire completed by parents as part of this evaluation, almost all parents agree that the school is well run, that teaching is good in the school and that the school is helping their child to progress in reading and Mathematics.

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
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;