

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Francis of Assisi National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Belmayne Balgriffin Dublin 13
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20304I

Date of inspection: 07-12-2017



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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	07-12-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents	<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 principal, deputy principal and teachers, and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Francis of Assisi National School operates under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. There are 450 pupils enrolled currently across sixteen mainstream classes from junior infants to sixth classes. Attendance rates among the pupils are very good. The school has reached fully-developed status this year. The board of management is engaged currently with the Planning and Building Unit of the Department of Education and Skills in respect of an application for a new school building. There are eight special education teachers (SETs) based in the school. One of the SET positions remains vacant and one has been filled only very recently. There are three temporary school-based teachers for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL); one of these positions remains vacant.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of the learning achievements of pupils is good.
- Teaching is of a high standard with some very good practice evident.
- The co-ordination and organisation of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), including those pupils with needs in EAL, are not sufficiently cohesive.
- Assessment is of a good standard, with a very good range of assessment-of-learning data generated.
- Support for pupils' well-being is of a good standard with some possibilities for improvement.
- The quality of leadership and management is good with some areas for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The co-ordination and organisation of provision for pupils with SEN, including those pupils with needs in EAL, should be reviewed to ensure more cohesive practices.
- To further progress good practice, the most effective behaviour management strategies identified by the school should be agreed and implemented consistently.
- School leadership needs to establish practices that support more effective consultation and communication among staff.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of the learning achievements of pupils is good. Most pupils engage actively and collaboratively in their learning. Written activities and projects show evidence of pupils' learning. Pupils express their creativity very well in the Visual Arts and Music. They demonstrate good levels of knowledge in social, environmental and scientific education lessons with scientific skills particularly well developed in some instances. Pupils in the infant classes engage in integrated play-based learning experiences. Overall, pupils with SEN are making satisfactory progress.
- The learning achievements of pupils in literacy are good. Pupils use talk and discussion to engage with their learning. They write to a good standard in a range of genres. Good emphasis is placed on developing their phonological awareness and word knowledge. The use of graded reading materials and class novels in guided reading groups is impacting positively on pupils' reading levels. Specific reading strategies are being used in many classes. This good practice should be extended systematically across all classes. Standardised test data indicate that attainment levels in literacy are improving consistently.
- Ar an iomlán, léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus foghlaim shásúil inti. De réir an churaclaim teanga bunscoile, tá tús curtha le forbairt na scileanna labhartha i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla a ailíniú chun cur le fhoghlaim na ndaltaí. B'fhiú an stráitéis seo a fhorbairt a thuilleadh chun scileanna na léitheoireachta agus na scríbhneoireachta i nGaeilge a fheabhsú. *Overall, pupils demonstrate a positive attitude and a satisfactory level in their learning of Irish. In line with the primary language curriculum, a start has been made in aligning the development of speaking skills in Irish and in English. There is potential to develop this strategy further to enhance pupils' reading and writing in Irish.*
- Learning achievements in numeracy are very good. Pupils demonstrate particular competence in number. Lessons in the infant classes are based on *Ready Set Go Maths*. Lessons in other classes enable pupils to explore concepts and their connections to real-life mathematics. Problem-solving approaches are utilised to good effect. Standardised test data indicate that attainments levels in numeracy are very good.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- Teaching is of a high standard with some very good practice evident. Teachers' individual practice is characterised by well-structured lessons, purposeful interactions with pupils and constructive feedback. Teachers' collective practice, currently focused on writing genres, guided reading and improving pupils' handwriting skills, is proving very successful in improving standards. This collective practice should now be utilised to progress other curricular and whole-school priorities.
- The co-ordination and organisation of provision for pupils with SEN, including those pupils with needs in EAL, are not sufficiently cohesive. While teachers use both in-class and withdrawal models of support, the model of support identified for some pupils is not always best suited to their needs. Implementation of the staged approach is evident. However, it is not applied consistently. Student support files are in place for pupils with SEN. Targets set are not always linked sufficiently to pupils' learning and behavioural needs. A whole-school programme has been devised to support pupils with needs in EAL; provision should also focus on making more effective links between pupils' learning in mainstream and support settings.

- Teachers' long-term and short-term planning is very effective. Teachers plan collaboratively and effectively for in-class support models. All teachers present monthly progress records; the format of these records is under review by the school.
- Overall, assessment is of a good standard with a wide range of data generated. Individual pupil profiles are compiled, comprising work samples and checklists. Some examples of effective peer and self-assessment were observed. The *Primary School Assessment Kit* is used to assess the language proficiency of pupils with needs in EAL. A broader range of diagnostic testing should be considered. Some very effective in-class assessment and monitoring practices were observed. Where analysis of standardised test data was most effective, it identified potential improvements for pupils in line with their abilities and language competencies.

3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- Support for pupils' well-being is of a good standard with some possibilities for improvement. The diversity and achievements of pupils are celebrated. The school engages with a range of worthwhile national programmes and initiatives. The use of effective behaviour management strategies, evident in many classes and in the school environs, is resulting in positive experiences for pupils, overall. However, aspects of the management of pupils require further attention. In some instances, pupils' negative behaviour impinges on learning. The most effective behaviour management strategies should be agreed and implemented consistently within the context of the code of behaviour. In responses to questionnaires, almost all pupils indicated that they felt safe in their class. However, a significant minority did not know if the children in their class behave well.
- The parent-teacher association supports and organises a wide range of events including the school's annual Summer Fair. The association is not affiliated currently to the National Parents' Council – Primary; this is something that the association might consider further. The parent nominees from the board of management reported that the school is the core of the local community. In responses to questionnaires, almost all parents reported that they feel welcome in the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is good with some areas for improvement. The board of management has a clear sense of the school's diverse context, attainment levels and identified priorities. In their questionnaire responses, a majority of teachers disagreed with the statements that there is good communication in the school and that their views are valued in the decision-making processes in the school. There is need to explore issues and expectations regarding communication and establish practices to support more effective consultation and communication among the staff. During the post-evaluation meeting, leadership indicated its commitment to on-going and open communication. Financial contributions from parents towards tuition during school hours in the curricular area of Drama should be discontinued.
- The leadership of the principal has been focused on the wide range of tasks associated with successfully achieving a fully-developed school. She articulates a vision of providing a broad educational experience with high expectations for pupils' learning. The very effective work of the in-school management team covers a wide range of duties including the development of worthwhile curricular initiatives. In reviewing the team's duties, due consideration should be given to the priorities identified during this evaluation. Staff members are commended for their role in

progressing additional facets to school life and for their earnest engagement in continuing professional development.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- During the evaluation, the school reported that it is not currently engaging in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action. However, evidence available from SSE work conducted prior to the industrial action shows that the school has engaged in the SSE process and there is evidence that agreed targets and actions are having a positive impact on teachers' collective practice and on learning in classrooms.

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 of quality 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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;