

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

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Saint Laurence's National School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Brookstone Road Baldoyle Dublin 13
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	20437E

**Date of inspection: 20-11-2019**



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agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 inspectors 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 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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	20-11-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li> <li>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</li> <li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li> <li>• Meeting with teachers</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 principal, deputy principal and teachers and board of management representative</li> </ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Laurence's National School, Baldoyle is a co-educational, primary school which enrolls pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school amalgamated in recent years and operates in two separate buildings located some distance apart. Staffing includes an administrative principal; seventeen mainstream teachers; and seven teachers for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN), one of these teachers is based in another school. There are currently 464 pupils enrolled in the school. School enrolment figures are increasing and school management expect this trend to continue. Commendably, school attendance rates are improving.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good and pupils present as highly engaged and motivated learners who participate enthusiastically in lessons.
- Overall the quality of teaching is good and teachers' collaborative practice is of a very high standard; approaches for team-teaching in Mathematics have been very successfully established across the school.
- Breathnaíodh roinnt cleachtais ar ardchaighdeán i múineadh na Gaeilge; níl cuir chuige scoile uile i bhforbairt scileanna éifeachtacha cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge i bhfeidhm, áfach. *Some excellent practice in the teaching of Irish was observed; however, whole school approaches to developing pupils' effective communication skills in Irish are not fully implemented.*
- Pupils' wellbeing is of a very high standard; the school atmosphere actively supports pupil inclusion, health and wellbeing.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good; the principal leads and manages the school very effectively.
- The school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very successful and is impacting positively on pupils' learning outcomes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tá gá le cur chuige comhsheasmhach agus straitéiseach maidir le múineadh scileanna cumarsáide éifeachtacha na ndaltaí a aontú agus a chur i bhfeidhm. *A consistent and strategic approach to the teaching of pupils' effective communication skills in Irish should be agreed and implemented.*

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils present as highly engaged and motivated learners who participate enthusiastically in lessons. Pupils' learning achievements are of a very high quality overall as demonstrated in samples of pupils' work and assessment data including standardised test results. Purposeful talk and discussion are key features in almost all lessons and pupils are active agents in their learning. The successful implementation of school wide approaches to increase pupils' capabilities in, and attitudes towards, Mathematics is impacting positively on pupils' experiences and attainment levels.
- During the evaluation, pupils were observed working collaboratively with others and engaging well in assigned learning tasks. In questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation, the majority of pupils agreed they work in groups most days. Where collaborative group work was highly successful, pupils were provided with explicit clarity regarding the purpose, procedure and expectation for successful learning outcomes.
- Pupils enjoy regular and diverse opportunities to be physically active and creative. The skills-based approaches across the school to develop the various strands of the physical education (PE) and visual arts curriculums are commendable. Very high quality displays which capture pupils' learning experiences and celebrate examples of writing and artistic work were observed throughout the school.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good ability to recall, discuss and competently communicate knowledge and understanding of key curricular concepts and content. During inspector interactions with pupils, the pupils could articulate knowledge and awareness of their locality with support; there is a need however, for pupils to develop more confidence and awareness of their locality on an independent level. Pupils were observed to read with fluency and expression in English, and samples of pupils' English writing indicate that they write successfully in a range of genres and for a variety of audiences. To further enhance pupils' language learning in English and Irish, it is advised that a more integrated approach be taken to ensure that the skills acquired in one language are more easily transferred to the second language.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- Overall the quality of teaching is good with highly effective practice observed in a number of classrooms. Where very good teaching was observed, lessons were well-structured and included clear communication of appropriately challenging learning intentions. During all lessons observed, teachers employed a wide range of teaching approaches and used stimulating and curriculum appropriate resources to engage the learners. D'ainneoin na dea-chleachtais seo, faoi láthair tá roinnt éagsúlachtaí sna modhanna teagaisc a úsáidtear chun scileanna teanga labhartha a chur chun cinn sa Ghaeilge. Sa sár-chleachtas a breathnaíodh, cuireadh an Fhoghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga (FCÁT) i bhfeidhm ar chaighdeán an-ard ar mhaithe le meon an-dearfach a chur chun cinn maidir le foghlaim na dara teanga. Tá gá le cuir chuige straitéiseacha a aontú agus a chur i bhfeidhm chun scileanna éifeachtacha cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt sa Ghaeilge. *Notwithstanding this good practice, there is, at present, some variation in the teaching methods employed in progressing oral language skills in Irish. Where excellent practice was observed, the meaningful use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was implemented to a very high standard in promoting*

*very positive dispositions towards second language learning. There is a need to develop pupils' effective communicative skills in Irish.*

- Procedures for team teaching have been very successfully developed across the school for teaching Mathematics. These facilitate effective professional collaboration by teachers and maximise learning opportunities for all pupils. The school is commended for the recent identification of literacy-based initiatives to support the development of team-teaching approaches for targeted cohorts of pupils. Mainstream teachers should ensure that effective monitoring systems are in place to sustain and improve upon the progress achieved at the end of each team-teaching intervention. In questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, almost all parents agree that teaching is good in the school and that their child is doing well in the school.
- The overall quality of teaching for pupils with SEN is very good. Support teachers are highly commended for the levels of diligence and care they apply to their role. They engage in professional dialogue and practice on a collaborative basis both formally and informally. Planning for the varying needs of identified pupils is very appropriate and comprehensive in nature. This includes regular communication and shared approaches between the school and home.
- There is an effective whole-school approach in place to assess and analyse the quality of pupils' learning outcomes with a commendable emphasis on pupils' skill development in PE and Visual Arts. Very good examples of differentiated teaching practices and formative feedback were observed which were explicitly linked to the meaningful analysis of assessment. This very good practice should be extended to all classes including the use of purposeful pupil self and peer-assessment. In pupil questionnaire responses most pupils reported that their teacher talks to them about how to improve their work.
- *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* has been commendably introduced in the infant classes of the school. The school has invested in a wide range of play-based learning resources and teachers prepare well for their lessons. Further development of the play-based pedagogies which incorporate pupils' emerging interests will promote and extend pupils as active agents in their learning.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELLBEING**

- Provision for pupils' wellbeing is of a very high standard; the school atmosphere actively supports inclusion, health and wellbeing. Pupil's self-confidence and self-worth are promoted through respectful and caring relationships throughout the school. Interactions amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers were predominantly positive, respectful and conducive to pupils' wellbeing. Almost all pupils reported that they feel safe in their class and almost all parents reported that their child is safe and well looked after in the school.
- Very effective procedures and initiatives are in place to ensure successful pupil transition at key points in their education and a strong sense of belonging is cultivated across the school. Very good emphasis is placed on environmental awareness and care and this is reflected in the school's very successful involvement in the Green Schools Programme.
- The school is commended for establishing forums to develop the pupils' ability to voice their opinions in relation to relevant school topics. In Inspectorate questionnaire responses, however, only a significant minority of pupils agreed that they have a say in how things are done in the school. Further work in the development of pupil leadership and voice through the newly established pupil council will strengthen pupil capacity in this area.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- The quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The board of management meets regularly and demonstrates very good commitment to improving the quality of education provided. School leaders have very successfully managed significant change in recent years due to the amalgamation of two schools. The chairperson visits the school regularly and actively supports the principal and teachers. Commendable initiatives to promote and nurture collegial support and collective identity have been successfully implemented.
- The principal's leadership is very effective and she displays strong commitment to promoting very high standards in teaching and learning across the curriculum. She actively encourages innovation in teaching and learning and a spirit of collaboration across the school.
- School leaders are active, innovative and highly motivated. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly identified. The targets for school self-evaluation (SSE) are central to their work and they carry out their duties diligently and effectively.
- A spirit of collegiality is nurtured across the school with many teachers taking on additional roles to support pupils' interests, learning experiences and learning outcomes.
- It was both reported and observed during the evaluation that the day-to-day management of the school is challenging because of the two campuses and also because of the condition of one of the two separate buildings in which the school is located.
- 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 standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

#### **5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The SSE process is very successful and is impacting positively on pupils' learning outcomes in the school. The successful implementation of school-wide approaches to increase pupils' capabilities and attitudes towards Mathematics and spelling is having a very positive impact on pupils' attainments and experiences.
- Commendably, the school has adopted a cyclical approach to policy and curricular development and review in updating key policies in line with the recent amalgamation.
- In the questionnaire responses the majority of parents agreed that the school regularly seeks the views of parents on school matters. In further exploring how parental capacity in school matters can be strengthened, the school should consider supporting the parents' association to affiliate to the National Parents Council - Primary.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board would like to express its appreciation to the staff for their diligence and commitment to the children in their care. The Board is delighted that the high standards being maintained throughout the school have been acknowledged. The Board is very happy that the pupils present as highly engaged and motivated learners and that the very high quality of displays was noted. It acknowledges that the quality of teaching is good with highly effective practice. It is very happy that the successful development of team teaching in Maths as part of the SSE process was identified and that the support teachers have been highly commended for their high levels of diligence and care.

It is delighted that differentiated teaching practices and meaningful analysis of assessment were observed and that Aistear has been commendably introduced in the infant classes. As great importance is placed on wellbeing the board is really pleased that the provision of pupils' wellbeing is of a very high standard and that the school actively supports inclusion, health and wellbeing.

Despite it being acknowledged that the day to day management of the school is challenging because of the two campuses and also the condition of one of the buildings, it is commendable that the principal's leadership is very effective and the school leaders are active and highly motivated.

### **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 acknowledge the recommendation given, "A consistent and strategic approach to the teaching of pupil's effective communication skills in Irish should be agreed and implemented."

Where excellent practice was observed, the meaningful use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was implemented to a very high standard in promoting very positive dispositions towards second language learning, these staff members have agreed to share their knowledge and skills and allow teacher/teacher observation.

While the school's application for the CLIL Irish Pilot Scheme was unsuccessful, the staff intend to implement their own whole school approach to CLIL.



## 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
<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 <b>very good</b> 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;