

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Senan's National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilmacow Co. Kilkenny Via Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20443W

Date of inspection: 06-03-2019



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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 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.
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

Dates of inspection	06-03-2019
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 parent representatives• 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 to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Senan's NS is located in the village of Kilmacow and is a nine-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The school opened in September 2014 following the amalgamation of St. Senan's BNS and St. Joseph's GNS. As a result, the school operates over the two original school sites, which are located 1km apart. This is the first year that the principal has a teaching role, having been administrative for the first four years. At the time of the evaluation, there were 179 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- While the overall learning achievements of the pupils are generally good, there is scope for improvement in aspects of their learning.
- The overall quality of teaching is good; there is an over reliance on teacher-directed, whole-class teaching and the use of workbooks in some classes.
- While support plans are devised for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), the learning targets are not sufficiently specific in addressing the priority learning needs of the pupils.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is of a good standard with the school committed to ensuring an orderly, safe and healthy learning environment.
- The quality of leadership is good with all the partners showing commitment to the school and sharing its vision.
- The school has begun the process of school self-evaluation (SSE) and is engaging in the six-step process to improve numeracy in the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pupils should be provided with regular opportunities to creatively display and report on their learning, and with opportunities to actively engage in self-directed learning.
- Whole-school approaches to the teaching of the writing genres, comprehension strategies and phonics should be prioritised for implementation across the school.
- The teachers should consistently plan high quality learning experiences for all the pupils, informed by clear learning objectives and they should consistently deliver well-structured lessons that are carefully monitored.
- Learning targets for pupils with SEN should be stated more specifically, reflecting the priority learning needs of the pupils.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- While the overall learning achievements of the pupils are generally good, there is scope for improvement in aspects of their learning. An analysis of assessment data in literacy and numeracy indicates pupils are achieving good standards in these areas of learning.
- In Mathematics, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of key mathematical procedures and they can recall their previous learning. There is scope to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. The school has recently reviewed its practice in Mathematics as part of the SSE process and has identified the need to link pupils' learning in Mathematics with the world around them. Specific planning for this, in teachers' short-term plans would ensure that this becomes a regular feature of lessons.
- In English, pupils are reading with appropriate fluency. In some classes the use of supplementary readers ensures that pupils are reading at their appropriate instructional level. Novels are a feature of the work in the middle and senior classes.
- While in some classes pupils can write in a number of genres and can articulate the components of the genres, in other settings, pupils' writing was largely book based, question and answer style functional writing. The school has identified the need to develop whole-school approaches to the teaching of the writing genres and considering the inconsistency of practice, it is recommended that this be prioritised for development. This would ensure the incremental development of pupils' skills. Whole-school approaches to the development of pupils' phonics and comprehension skills should also be implemented.
- Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach ag na daltaí don Ghaeilge. Tá raon amhráin agus rannta foghlamtha acu de ghlanmheabhar, chomh maith le roinnt nathanna agus foclóra. Léann na ndaltaí de réir a gcumais agus de réir rialacha foghraíochta na Gaeilge.
It is evident that the pupils have a positive attitude towards Irish. They have learned a range of songs and poems by heart as well as a variety of phrases and words. Pupils are reading at their level of ability and they observe the pronunciation conventions of Irish.
- Pupils engage in a variety of learning experiences. In the majority of classes pupils are motivated and engage at a commendable level in learning activities. In other settings the pupils were observed to lack engagement and enjoyment in their learning. In the pupil questionnaires a significant minority of pupils responded that they either don't know if or don't enjoy their lessons and learning. The majority of pupils also report that they don't work in groups most days. It is recommended that in order to improve pupils' engagement and enjoyment of their learning that they should be provided with regular opportunities to creatively display and report on their learning. The active engagement of pupils in self-directed learning should also be further promoted.
- A broad range of good quality work in the Visual Arts is displayed. The school participates in a number of initiatives to support pupils' learning. These include the Peace Proms, the Junior Entrepreneur programme and the Green Schools programme. The school vegetable garden is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum. Regular trips to places of interest are also arranged.
- The school has a very good range of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment and this supports teaching, learning and assessment. The school is going to be recognised later this year as a Digital School of Distinction.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good, but a significant minority of practice was also observed to be satisfactory. All teachers produce long and short-term plans, the standard of which varies from the listing of content to be taught to the outlining of clear curriculum informed learning objectives.
- Where teaching is most effective, lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives, and engaging, collaborative and differentiated learning experiences provided to the pupils. Their progress is monitored based on the learning objectives. However, in some settings there is an over reliance on teacher-directed whole-class teaching and the use of workbooks. In order to optimise pupils' learning

further attention should be paid by teachers to the planning of high quality learning experiences for all the pupils, informed by clear learning objectives and the provision of well-structured lessons that are carefully monitored. The collaborative sharing of good practice would support consistency across the school.

- Most pupils report that the teachers explain things clearly, while most parents consider that teaching is good in the school. In general, the teachers provide attractive learning environments and have effective classroom management skills.
- Support is provided through both in-class support models, and the withdrawal of pupils. Support plans are devised for pupils in receipt of support. While a range of learning targets is defined in these plans, they could be stated more specifically, reflecting the priority learning needs of the pupils. Reviews of these plans should include clear documentation of pupils' progress in relation to the targets set and the recording of modified targets for the next instructional period.
- A range of assessment approaches is promoted in the school, including teacher observation, testing, and the maintenance of pupil portfolios. A class folder for each class transfers with the class and records relevant information on pupils' progress. In some classes, assessment for learning strategies, are effectively promoted.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is of a good standard. Respectful interactions are evident and the school is committed to ensuring an orderly, safe and healthy learning environment. Strategies such as the Friends for Life and Rainbows programmes are used to support pupils' well-being. The school also provides programmes to equip pupils with skills to reflect on and modify their behaviour when required. Pupils engage in valuable learning experiences through a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.
- Almost all parents, in their replies to questionnaires issued, state that their child feels safe and well looked after in school and that the school helps their child's social and personal development.
- Highly commendable links have also been established with external agencies to support pupils' well-being. The school has recently welcomed a number of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL).

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is good. The board is supportive of the school. It meets regularly, reviews plans and policies and ensures that both school buildings are well maintained. The chairperson is a frequent visitor to the school and shows high levels of commitment and interest in the school.
- The teaching principal was appointed in 2017 and since then has made very good progress in developing plans and policies to support the smooth running of the school. Despite the school being on two sites he, together with the board, staff and parents works to ensure that it identifies as one school with a shared vision and direction. He is supported by the in-school management (ISM) team who carry out their duties conscientiously. Regular meetings of the ISM team are held with minutes recorded. There is, however, a need to develop more effective curriculum leadership practices. Increased focus should be placed on developing a shared understanding of good practice and the bringing about of systematic improvements in teaching and learning which would be monitored on an on-going basis.
- The current practice of withdrawing whole class groupings, by the special education teacher, should be discontinued as this does not reflect the purpose of this provision.
- The school fosters very good relations with the community and a strong sense of community is evident. Effective communication strategies are in place to inform and support parents regarding their children's education. The parents' association provides very good support to the school including providing feedback on school policies and plans. In the questionnaire responses almost all parents agree that there is a good atmosphere and that the school is well run.

- The school provides placements for student teachers. This engagement in initial teacher education programmes is highly praised and provides valuable professional benefits to teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has begun the process of SSE and is engaging in the six-step process to improve numeracy in the school.

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 accepts the findings of the report and is happy to find that the school's emphasis on an orderly, safe and healthy learning environment is recognised. This is further supported by almost all parents stating that their child feels safe and well looked after in school and that the school helps their child's social and personal development. The report highlights the positive work by the Board of Management, staff and parents to ensure the school operates with a shared vision and direction despite the school being on two sites. Finally the Board of Management is pleased the report recognises that both a strong sense of community is evident within the school and that the school fosters very good relations with the community.

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

The Board of Management acknowledges the recommendations made in the report and will work together with the principal and staff to use the recommendations to further enhance teaching and learning in our school. One of the recommendations, a whole school approach to the teaching of writing genres, has already begun to be implemented.

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 very good 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;