

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

**Whole School Evaluation**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School Name</b>	St Fergal's National School
<b>Seoladh na scoile/ School Address</b>	Ballywaltrim Bray Co Wicklow
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	20466L

**Date of inspection: 22-03-2019**



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An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

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

## Whole-School Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	22-03-2019
<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><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</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

St. Fergal's National School was established in 2015 following the amalgamation of St. Fergal's Junior School and St Fergal's Senior School. It operates across two buildings on one campus. St. Fergal's is a catholic, co-educational school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. The school participates in band 2 of DEIS, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. At the time of the evaluation there were 30 teachers working in the school comprising nineteen mainstream teachers, one home-school-community-liaison (HSCL) teacher, two early start teachers, seven special education needs (SEN) teachers and an administrative principal. Attendance for the 421 pupils enrolled in the school is very good overall and the school is highly commended for improving and sustaining attendance.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Overall, there is appropriate provision for leadership and management in the school, the work of board of management is commendable while improvements are required in the work of the in-school management team.
- Action is required to improve school panning and school self-evaluation in specified areas, whole-school curriculum plans do not reflect the school context or guide classroom practice.
- Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good, in some instances teaching approaches and methodologies did not sufficiently support pupils' meaningful engagement in lessons.
- For the most part, teaching and learning in Mathematics is very effective; there is scope for development in the reading achievement level for a significant number of pupils in middle and senior classes.
- Provision for pupils with special education needs is of a high standard.
- The pupils' ability to play a wide range of tunes on the tin whistle in middle and senior classes is praised.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the duties of the in-school management team are reflective of school priorities to include, leading the development, implementation and monitoring of whole-school administrative and curriculum planning; members of the in-school management team should provide an annual report to school management on their areas of responsibility.
- Whole school curriculum plans should be developed as a matter of priority.

- A broader range of reading approaches, including differentiated-instructional reading should be implemented at middle and senior class levels to meet the needs of pupils who are challenged by reading.
- In order to further develop the pupils' learning experiences and support meaningful engagement for all pupils, it is recommended that the very effective teaching and learning practices evident in some settings be shared and developed throughout the school.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- The work of the board of management is commendable. It meets regularly and oversees the careful management of school accounts. The chairperson is a regular visitor to the school and all board members demonstrate a strong sense of pride in the school community. The anti-bullying policy does not meet the Department's *Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2013)*. It is recommended that an anti-bullying policy that is in line with the Department's procedures be developed and implemented as a matter of priority. The board is supportive in the development of initiatives to support teaching and learning; it should now play a greater role in overseeing the impact of initiatives on pupils' learning.
- Satisfactory leadership and management is provided by the principal and in-school management team and improvements are needed in areas of their work. The team meets regularly and carries out a range of duties as part of their responsibilities. To date, sport and digital learning have been developed by members of the in-school management team on a whole-school basis. At the time of the evaluation, a review of all duties pertaining to each member of the in-school management team was about to commence. It is recommended that the duties of the in-school management team reflect school priorities to include: leading the development, implementation and monitoring of whole-school administrative and curriculum plans. In accordance with circular 0070/2018 members of the in-school management team should provide an annual report to the deputy principal/principal with reference to the objectives set for the post holder and their responsibilities. These reports should form part of the principal's annual report on leadership and management to the board of management.
- The management of resources is of a high standard. Provision for ICT is good. Some classrooms are very well resourced. A number of settings do not have a suitable range of graded-reading material to meet pupils' learning needs and in other instances there is limited access to percussion instruments. As part of the upcoming review of curriculum plans, it is recommended that resources are audited and shared so that all pupils have access to a good range of resources. The school's engagement with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes is good.
- Effective practices exist in relation to the management of relationships and communications between parents and the school community. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address communication among the staff. Collaborative practices exist in relation to team teaching, which are supported by regular team meetings, materials are also shared on the school shared folder. Teacher questionnaire data indicates that a few teachers did not know or did not agree that there was good communication among staff. The in-

school management team should develop channels of effective communication among the staff concerning their areas of responsibility and day to day organisational matters.

- Improvement is needed in some classes in the management of pupils; practice observed ranged from fair to exemplary. Where exemplary practice was observed, interactions between teachers and pupils and pupils and each other were respectful, and high expectations were set for pupils' participation in lessons and learning outcomes. In some instances, pupils contributed to class discussion with confidence and demonstrated high levels of interest in the opinions of their class mates. In a few instances, planning, preparation and assessment was not appropriate to pupils' learning needs, which resulted in low levels of meaningful pupil engagement. Less than a quarter of the pupils surveyed as part of the evaluation agree that the children in their class behave well. Where necessary, it is recommended that teachers respond to the individual learning needs of pupils and differentiate teaching and learning activities as a means of enhancing the management and engagement of all pupils.

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

- Action is required to improve school planning and school self-evaluation in specified areas. Emphasis has been placed on the development of whole-school administrative policies and the school's DEIS plan. The DEIS plan which is also the school's SSE plan is well structured and includes a good list of actions. In some areas of the plan, there is greater need for more learner-outcome focused targets. The school's enrolment policy requires development to reflect the inclusive practice in the school.
- Whole-school curriculum plans do not suit the school's current context or guide practice in classrooms. It is recommended that an action plan is developed for the systematic review of curriculum plans without delay. To this end, members of the in-school management team, together with the principal should play a significant curriculum leadership role in the review and development, and implementation and monitoring phase of plans.
- Teachers' individual planning is of a high standard. Teachers are praised for the commencement of planning for the *Primary Language Curriculum*. In some instances, there is insufficient planning for pupils at different levels of ability. It is recommended that short-term plans include differentiated-learning outcomes for pupils at different levels of ability particularly in reading.

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

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good and practice observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Very good practice involves, the effective use of resources and methodologies, well-structured and paced lesson and learning outcomes matched to the pupils' ability. Responses to pupil questionnaires indicate that the majority of pupils agree that their teacher explains things clearly and agree that they like school. In a number of instances, teaching approaches and methodologies did not sufficiently support pupils' meaningful engagement and quality learning outcomes and there was an over reliance on whole-class teacher-directed instruction. In order to further develop the pupils' learning experiences and support meaningful engagement for all pupils, it is recommended that very effective teaching and learning practices be shared. The principal and in-school management team will be instrumental in implementing and monitoring this development as part of the improvement of curriculum planning.
- Overall, there is appropriate provision for teaching and learning in English, although some possibilities for improvement exist. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to write across a range of genres and samples of quality penmanship were observed. Assessment

data indicates good progress in the teaching of spelling. Very good quality reading outcomes are evident in the infant and junior classes. Teachers are highly commended for the implementation of a wide range of reading approaches which are having a positive impact on reading attainment at these levels. A significant minority of pupils read at a level below their chronological age in middle and senior classes. It is recommended that a broader range of reading approaches, including differentiated-instructional reading be implemented at middle and senior classes to meet the needs of the significant cohort of pupils who are challenged by reading.

- Overall, teaching and learning in Mathematics is very effective. For the most part, pupil attainment has been maintained in recent years at a good level. In the main, pupils demonstrate competence in number operations, reasoning and use of language in Mathematics.
- Tá cáilíocht na teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil. Tugadh faoi deara úsáid chuí as achmainní, taispeántais, rainn agus as cluichí i gceachtanna. Léirigh daltaí sna ranganna soisearacha cumas maith éisteachta agus labhartha i nGaeilge. I go leor cásanna tá deacrachtaí ag daltaí abairtí a chumadh, ceisteanna a chur, nó labhairt go neamhspleách le muinín faoi théamaí atá cíortha acu. Moltar don scoil clár córasach a chumadh ag leibhéal cuí do gach leibhéal ranga. Ní mór an chlár seo a chur i bhfeidhm go céimniúil.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory. The use of appropriate resources, displays, rhymes and games was observed in lessons. Pupils in the junior classes demonstrated a good ability in listening and speaking Irish. In many instances pupils have difficulty composing sentences, posing questions or speaking independently and confidently about themes they have covered. It is recommended that the school devise a specific language programme with appropriate content and skills for each class level. This programme should be implemented systematically.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in Music is good. The majority of pupils play a wide range of tunes on the tin whistle with enthusiasm. Music lessons observed involved skilful use of digital technology. Many pupils did not have a competent knowledge of the musical elements and in some classes they were unable to perform songs appropriate for their class level. As the whole school plan is developed, it is recommended that it guides practice in the teaching of a wide repertoire of songs, listening and responding and the consistent teaching of the musical elements.
- Overall, assessment practices are good. Teachers in all settings gather a variety of assessment data. Good use is made of assessment data to identify individual pupils with learning needs, currently it is not being sufficiently used to inform plans for individuals or groups of pupils in some class settings. It is recommended that further analysis of data take place in order to respond to individual pupil's needs and groups of pupils. As assessment practices are further developed consideration should be given to extending capacity in data analysis in order to identify whole-school trends and priorities.

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

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a high standard. Support is delivered through a combination of in-class support and withdrawal methods. Plans are devised for all pupils in receipt of additional supports. A range of diagnostic and screening assessment is in evidence. In some setting very good pre and post-intervention assessment data is in evidence and should be implemented in all settings in Mathematics and literacy. As the special educational needs policy is developed it is recommended that pupils' learning targets are more specific and that assessment practices are used to monitor and refine targets as

necessary. Very good links are fostered with professionals from external agencies such as speech and language therapists to support the pupils' language skills.

- The work of the Home School Community Liaison teacher (HSCL) is highly effective. Interventions are planned to support key priorities within the school community and very strong links are promoted with parents and the wider community. The school completion co-ordinator, early start teachers, HSCL teacher and staff successfully support attendance and pupil transition to and from St. Fergals. The work of the care team in supporting pupils with significant needs is praised.

## 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**

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

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## **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 In—School Management team met and prioritised certain administrative and curriculum areas. The updated Code of Behaviour is virtually complete, the Enrolment policy has been changed to reflect the inclusive nature of the school. The Anti-Bullying policy is the next priority and will be formulated to meet the Department’s Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2013). Our SEN and Assessment Policies will be tackled in September.

Work has commenced on the review and development of a whole-school literacy plan, an audit of the books in the Junior and Senior Buildings will take place before the end of June and arrangements have been put in place for the teachers in classes 3rd - 6th to experience the very successful Lift Off programme in operation in the Junior Building before the end of June. We intend utilising our close relationship with some of the teacher-training colleges and/or get support from PDST to make further improvements in this area. Appointments are in place with publishers to view and evaluate their literacy programmes. A report on these actions will be provided to the Board of Management at its June meeting and this practice will continue at all subsequent Board meetings. Whole-school curriculum plans for SESE and Maths have been prioritised for the Autumn followed, on completion, by development of other agreed whole-school curriculum plans. Each member of the In-school Management team will also provide an annual report to the Principal.

The Board of Management welcomes the report, which has helped us to focus on strengthening unity within the school following the amalgamation.

While it is pleased that the amalgamation has gone unexpectedly well, it sees that there are further tasks to be undertaken. The Board will gladly involve itself in Policy and Curriculum areas within the school and has taken steps towards this end. These issues will become a standard item on future Board agendas.

In general, the Board of Management note the recommendations of the Inspectorate and will Endeavour to undertake same.