An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Mhuire NS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Mooncoin Co Kilkenny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>20492M</td>
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Date of inspection: 04-04-2019
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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>04-04-2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>• Meeting with parent representatives</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with teachers</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Mhuire NS was formed in September 2016 following the amalgamation of Scoil Mhuire Lourdes BNS and Presentation Convent GNS. It is a vertical, co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. Since the amalgamation, the school has been operating on two sites which are located at opposite ends of Mooncoin village. The school currently has ten mainstream class teachers, four full-time and one part-time special education teachers (SET) and an administrative principal. Since amalgamation, the school has seen the number of pupils rise to the largest figure in decades, with 267 pupils now enrolled in the school. Attendance levels are very good in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good with the pupils displaying positive attitudes to their learning and engaging very meaningfully in activities; more opportunities for self-directed learning could be provided.
• The quality of teaching is highly effective with teachers demonstrating high levels of care and commitment to their pupils.
• The quality of leadership and management is very good; the principal provides exemplary leadership, displaying very successful management and organisational skills and is ably supported by a highly committed in-school management team.
• The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is very high and it is evident that the care and support of the pupils is central to the work of the school.
• The school is engaging very effectively in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
• Throughout the school, there is a commendable sense of teamwork and shared understanding regarding school practices and priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• In order to build on the very good learning experiences of the pupils and the highly effective teaching in the school, opportunities for pupils to engage further in self-directed learning activities which more regularly involve them in lateral thinking, reasoning and deducing could be promoted.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good. The school provides a welcoming, stimulating and harmonious learning environment and as a result, the pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning and engage very meaningfully in activities. They articulate their views confidently and competently and can recall accurately their previous learning. Overall, they experience a wide variety of learning activities and are supported to grow in confidence and independence.

- Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is a strong feature of the work of the school and is implemented very successfully, ensuring valuable focus on the development of pupils’ independent skills, early oral language development and creative thinking.

- In Mathematics, pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts and procedures. Teachers demonstrate great capacity and interest in Mathematics and are committed to fostering positive attitudes to Mathematics among the pupils. Pupils have access to a range of concrete materials and these are used to enable them to develop solid conceptual understanding. They are also provided with opportunities to talk about their learning and to participate in maths trails.

- In English pupils’ skills are developed systematically with whole-school initiatives for the development of pupils’ writing and comprehension skills yielding very positive results. Samples of pupils’ writing in a variety of genres are attractively displayed across the school. Literacy Lift-Off is implemented successfully with the junior classes and there is very good use of graded reading texts ensuring that pupils are reading at their own instructional levels. Literacy Hour is a feature of the work in the senior classes and is proving very successful.

- As part of SSE the school is focusing on the discreet teaching of reading fluency and a number of strategies is being implemented effectively across the school.

- In Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) the pupils produce interesting projects individually and in groups. They speak knowledgeably about the projects and take pride in the presentation of them.

- Arts education is strongly promoted in the school. Samples of pupils’ work in Visual Arts are creatively displayed and pupils enter a variety of local and national competitions. The school participates in the Peace Proms and has recently formed a traditional Irish music group. The school has also made an application to the Arts Council of Ireland to be part of the Creative Schools Initiative.

- Science experiments and investigations are regularly reported on and demonstrated at the monthly assemblies, where all pupils are invited to question and explore the topics. Scratch coding has been introduced this year with the lessons co-delivered by a parent from the Parents’ Association (PA) and a class teacher. The school is promoting the Green Schools programme, the Active Flag programme and is recognised as a Health promoting school.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is highly effective. Teachers are very committed to their work and to developing and extending their practice. They engage enthusiastically in continued professional development (CPD) and are open to adopting new interventions and strategies. Teachers have high expectations of pupils’ work and communicate these expectations effectively to pupils.

- Teachers deliver very good quality lessons, which are well planned with clear curriculum informed learning objectives. All pupils surveyed consider that their teachers explain things clearly. Teachers employ a variety of methodologies to ensure that pupils are fully engaged,
including collaborative group work. Excellent questioning of the pupils supports their higher order thinking skills. Considering the very high quality of pupil engagement, the further promotion of self-directed learning which engages pupils in lateral thinking, reasoning and deducing will advance this good work further.

- It is highly praiseworthy that a whole-school approach to planning is in use in the school and teachers produce high quality long and short-term plans. Pupil attainment is monitored consistently and pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own learning.
- Teachers provide attractive, well-organised learning environments and have very effective classroom management skills. In the questionnaire responses, all the parents reported that their children enjoy school and that their children are doing well at school.
- In Irish, the pupils are afforded good opportunities to use their Irish through the presentation of role-play activities and games. Pupils’ pronunciation is commended and they know a broad collection of songs and poetry.
- The teaching of pupils with additional learning needs is provided in a positive and supportive manner. A number of team-teaching models have been successfully developed and adopted to facilitate inclusive, enriching, learning experiences in literacy, numeracy and social skills for these pupils. Where appropriate, pupils are also provided with supplementary support in individual and small-group support sessions outside the mainstream classroom. Careful monitoring and liaison between mainstream and special education teachers (SET) ensures suitable continuity and progression in pupils’ learning.

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

- The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is of a very high standard with the school effectively creating a warm and holistic learning experience for the pupils. The school encourages the pupils to see themselves as part of local, national and global communities and to be good citizens.
- In questionnaire responses, all parents agreed that there was a good atmosphere in the school.
- The pupils are enabled to participate in a very wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, which are focused on promoting the pupils’ well-being, physical activity and social and emotional development. The recent addition of buddy benches is impacting very positively on the pupils, as is the Friends for Life programme and transition to secondary school programmes.
- Pupil voice is supported effectively through pupil engagement with the student council and committees for the Green Schools and Active schools programmes.
- The school is proud of its place in the local community and fosters effective working relationships between staff, pupils, parents and all those engaged in the life and work of the school. The parents’ association provide valuable support to the school, including providing expert speakers and supporting parents with particular skills to share them with the school. They strive to ensure that all parents are welcomed and aware that they are valued members of the school community. An open door policy is in place and text messages and the school website ensure very good communication between home and school.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management is very supportive of the school and together with all the partners has a clear vision for the school
and its future. The board is actively pursuing the bringing together of the school onto one green field site. The board meets regularly and discharges its financial, legislative and leadership duties very effectively.

- The principal provides exemplary leadership, displays very successful management and organisational skills and is passionate about promoting a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning while also ensuring the holistic development of each child. She is totally invested in the school having been principal of the boys’ school before amalgamation and has very successfully, together with all the partners, lead the school through the amalgamation process. All partners report very positively on the benefits of the amalgamation and how good it has been for the pupils and the community.
- She is ably supported by the in-school management team who carry out a range of duties conscientiously. The team meet regularly and work collaboratively to ensure high quality learning experiences for the pupils across their range of interests. They discuss and review the interventions and approaches being implemented and adapt them if necessary. Throughout the school there is a commendable sense of teamwork and shared understanding regarding school practices and priorities.
- The management and staff of the school facilitate placements for student teachers.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school is engaging very effectively in the SSE process. Work previously undertaken by the two schools, prior to amalgamation is continuing to be implemented across the school. The school has devised a new plan, which focuses on learning outcomes from the Primary Language Curriculum. All teachers are consistently implementing strategies to address the targets in the plan. Extending the involvement of parents in the SSE process is advised.
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 and staff of Scoil Mhuire NS welcome the very positive and affirming report of the Whole School Evaluation. We are particularly pleased with the observations on the learning, teaching, management and leadership in our school:

We are delighted also that the sense of teamwork and shared understanding regarding school practices and priorities was recognised as this is something which the staff have worked hard to foster and develop since our amalgamation.

We appreciate the recognition of our efforts to provide a safe, supportive and positive environment for all the pupils of our school where learning is prioritised and pupils are actively engaged.

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

Considering the very high quality of pupil engagement which has been observed at Scoil Mhuire NS, the school now plan to further promote self-directed learning to develop in our pupils the skills of lateral thinking, reasoning and deducing to advance this good work further, as encouraged by the Inspectorate.

We will work and plan together as a staff to develop the capacity and teach the skills which will enable our pupils to take ownership of their own learning; empowering the pupil to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which is just beyond his or her abilities.

Through our ongoing commitment to extending the highly effective practices which are notably embedded, the board will continue to support the culture of Continuous Professional Development which has flourished among the staff since amalgamation in the pursuit of excellence in the quality level of teaching and learning at Scoil Mhuire NS.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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 <strong>very good</strong> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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