

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Brigid's National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Killoughter Redhills Co. Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17230L

Date of inspection: 20-11-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
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

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

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Brigid’s National School is a rural, co-educational school which is located in Redhills, Co. Cavan and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. There are 102 pupils enrolled and the school has experienced considerable increase in enrolment over the last four years. The school has four mainstream classes and two classes for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs); one of these classes was established very recently in September 2019 and the other previously in September 2018. Expansion and change in staffing were significant context features of this school at the time of inspection. Pupil attendance is very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning is good with pupils benefitting from a suitable range of learning experiences including regular exploration of digital technologies; pupils’ speaking skills in Irish require improvement.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with very good practice noted in a few contexts; supplementary support for pupils with special education needs (SEN) in mainstream classes is provided entirely by withdrawing them from class, individually in some instances, and models of in-class support have not yet been established as advocated in the *Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs*.
- The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is very good; a caring and affirming learning environment has been successfully nurtured.
- The quality of assessment practices is good; the use of assessment information to inform differentiated teaching initiatives has not yet been fully realised.
- Leadership and management is very good with school leaders demonstrating commendable capacities to manage change processes in an effective and strategic manner.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) is of a very good quality; careful co-ordination, high levels of collaboration among staff and systematic monitoring contributes to the very positive impact of improvement initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should further develop pupils’ speaking skills in Irish on a whole-school basis; this should include the development of an action plan that supports the incremental development of formal and informal Irish and careful monitoring of pupils’ progression.
- The practice of providing supplementary support for pupils with SEN in mainstream classes by withdrawing them from class, particularly on an individual basis, should be reviewed, where

appropriate, to also include in-class support in order to provide pupils with more collaborative learning experiences and to strengthen the congruence between mainstream and special education provision.

- The range of assessment data should be used to a greater extent to develop and inform differentiated teaching initiatives, including early intervention and in-class support models.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils demonstrate positive dispositions towards their learning; in particular, during collaborative learning activities, such as integrated play-based activities and digital learning activities.
- Pupils avail of a wide range of learning activities that support their holistic development with ample opportunities to explore their creativity across a number of curricular areas.
- Pupils are making good progress in literacy and numeracy although there remains some scope to enhance the level of challenge for pupils of higher ability. The implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum is impacting positively on the development of pupils' speaking skills in English. Pupils' social skill development and their capacity to communicate their thoughts and feelings verbally and non-verbally is a significant strength of their learning.
- Pupils' speaking skills in Irish require improvement. A whole-school emphasis should now be placed on the incremental development of pupils' use of formal and informal Irish.
- Pupils show good understanding of local History and Geography and can discuss a good range of Science investigations with keen awareness of the skills and concepts involved.
- Pupils in ASD classes enjoy an appropriate range of multi-sensory learning experiences that address their prioritised needs and enable them to access a broad and balanced curriculum. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the integration of pupils with ASD with their peers in mainstream classes where appropriate.
- The data from the questionnaires returned by pupils and parents during the evaluation indicate very high levels of satisfaction in relation to learning.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is good with very good practice noted in a few contexts. This practice was characterised by very high levels of differentiation and a suitable balance of teacher-led and pupil-led activities. There remains scope to extend differentiation practices on a whole-school basis, in particular for pupils of higher ability.
- *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curricular Framework* is very well established in the infant classes; pupils are enabled to plan for and reflect on their individual and collaborative, play-based learning activities.
- Teachers in all contexts interact positively and purposefully with pupils to stimulate and support their learning. Careful questioning and timely formative feedback are key features of teacher-pupil interactions. Teachers consistently model and elicit the English language with pupils in a wide range of meaningful contexts and this practice is praiseworthy.
- Teachers provide comprehensive preparation to support their teaching using technology very effectively to share plans and progress reports. The *Continuum of Support* has been successfully implemented and the relevant documentation to reflect pupils' individualised

learning programmes is very detailed and includes a record of collaboration with pupils' parents.

- Supplementary support for pupils with special education needs (SEN) in mainstream classes is provided entirely by withdrawing them from class, individually in some instances. Models of in-class support have not yet been established as advocated in *the Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. This practice of providing supplementary support for pupils with SEN in mainstream classes by withdrawal alone should be reviewed, where appropriate, to also include in-class support with a view to providing pupils with more collaborative learning experiences and to strengthen the congruence between mainstream and special education provision. Teachers should now review these arrangements to ensure that pupils benefit from more collaborative learning experiences and in-class support where this is possible.
- Provision for pupils in the ASD classes is very effective and worthy of note. It is informed by deep pedagogical knowledge and understanding; the extensive preparation of visual resources and the consistent and effective deployment of strategies optimise personalised learning and progression for pupils.
- The school participates in a cluster for digital teaching and learning as part of the Excellence Programme; their successful promotion of strategies to facilitate digital teaching and learning and creative problem-solving is highly commended.
- The quality of assessment is good. Teachers use a wide range of information to monitor pupil progress in most curricular areas and plan to introduce digital technologies to enhance assessment practices. The range of assessment data available should now be used to a greater extent to develop and inform differentiated teaching initiatives, including early intervention and in-class support models.
- The data from the parent questionnaires indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching in this school.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. An affirming, respectful and child-centred culture is evident. Staff are highly attuned to pupils' need and very attentive to the inclusion of all pupils, in particular pupils with special educational needs.
- Well-being is the focus of the current SSE improvement initiative and a range of activities have been successfully established to enhance provision for pupils' well-being, including Cosmic Yoga, mindfulness and structured social skills programmes.
- A suitable range of extra-curricular activities complements the curricular activities provided for pupils.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Leadership and management is very good. The board of management fulfils its oversight roles with efficiency and has successfully managed a number of school developments.
- The principal demonstrates highly commendable leadership skills. He has been successful in nurturing a collaborative school community while innovating and managing a significant number of change and development processes. He is proactive in building the individual and collective capacity of the staff and communicates a clear vision for ongoing development of the school.
- The deputy principal and the assistant principal demonstrate very good capacity to lead and manage their designated responsibilities which have been reviewed in accordance with DES

Circular 0070/2018 on Leadership and Management in Primary Schools. Regular ISM meetings are held. A positive sense of teamwork and collaboration prevails among the staff.

- School leaders are proactive in building relationships with parents and a variety of communication approaches are used effectively. The data from the parent questionnaires submitted during the evaluation indicate that almost all parents are very satisfied that the school is well-run and they are welcome in the school.
- The staff of 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 quality of SSE is very good. School leaders have been successful in nurturing a culture of improvement, collaboration and innovation in teaching and learning. There are many examples of collaborative professional reflection leading to the development of whole-school improvement initiatives that have impacted positively on teaching and learning. These include the promotion of comprehension strategies and writing genres in English and problem-solving approaches in Mathematics.
- The cyclical process of SSE has been well-established and current priority areas for development include a whole-school emphasis on well-being and also on problem-solving using technology. The school has recently hosted a number of other primary schools to share and promote best practice in relation to digital teaching and learning.

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 of St. Brigid's National School welcomes this very positive WSE/MLL report which acknowledges and affirms the dedication and commitment of the school staff, the Board of Management, the principal, the in-school management team, the parents' association and parent body of our school.

It is pleased that the school met all of the child protection requirements set out by the Department of Education. The board is pleased that the report identifies and acknowledges the high standards of learning, teaching and pupil achievement evident in the school across mainstream classes, special education and special classes.

The board is particularly pleased that the culture of respect, positive school atmosphere and the support and care for pupils' wellbeing have been acknowledged. The board was affirmed by the positive feedback from the parent and pupil questionnaires.

The board are pleased with the extremely positive response to the school's School Self Evaluation process and successful promotion of strategies to facilitate digital teaching, learning and creative problem solving.

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 and welcomes the recommendations contained within the report. The school appreciates the opportunity to use the recommendations in its self-evaluation and self-improvement processes.

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. 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;