

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballinlough N S
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballinlough Kells Co Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	092381

Date of inspection: 19-10-2018



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 inspector 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, Well-being).
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	19-10-2018
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• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the school staff and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballinlough National School is a rural, co-educational school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Meath. It has four mainstream classes and provides education and care for 88 pupils. Attendance patterns are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes is very good overall with a few areas for improvement; pupils' independent writing and spelling skills are not fully developed in a number of classes and there remains scope to enhance pupils' speaking skills in Irish.
- Pupils' learning experiences are of a very high quality; they actively engage in a broad and balanced range of enriching curricular experiences that facilitate their holistic development.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good with teachers' individual and collaborative practice impacting positively on pupils' learning.
- Support for pupils' well-being is very good; pupils' sense of identity and belonging is nurtured in a positive and well-ordered learning environment.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good; the range of responsibilities is effectively undertaken and careful attention is given to the ongoing development of the school.
- Very effective curricular leadership provided by the principal and the in-school management team along with a whole-staff commitment to implementing improvement plans have contributed to the very high quality of school self-evaluation (SSE).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should adopt a whole-school approach to improving pupils' spelling and editing skills in their independent writing in English.
- Tá gá le monatóireacht sa bhreis a dhéanamh ar dhul chun cinn scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí i nGaeilge le go gcuirfear le hábhar teanga na ndaltaí ag gach rang leibhéal. *There is need to further monitor the progression in pupils' speaking skills in Irish with a view to extending the content delineated for each class level.*

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- Pupils' learning is very good overall with a few areas identified for further development. The pupils enjoy and benefit from a cohesive learning experience that is underpinned by a whole-school, systematic approach to the integration of curricular areas and thematic learning. Pupils demonstrate very positive learning dispositions and notably high levels of active engagement in a broad range of enriching learning activities.
- Pupils work independently and collaboratively in a purposeful and productive manner, demonstrating very good listening and social skills. Commendable examples of paired and small-group learning activities are noted, including projects involving the effective use of technology.
- Pupils enjoy ample opportunity to use and develop their language skills in English; they read a wide variety of reading material, much of which is differentiated in accordance with their varying abilities. Pupils engage in a wide variety of creative writing and demonstrate a keen understanding of the characteristics of many genre. There remains scope to enhance pupils' application of grammatical and spelling conventions in their independent writing. Teachers are focusing on the improvement of pupils' handwriting where this is required.
- Pupils demonstrate highly commendable learning outcomes in Mathematics and the introduction of coding would further enhance their learning. A good knowledge and understanding of local history, geography and Irish plant and animal life is a positive feature of pupils' learning. They also show great familiarity with a wide range of artists and can discuss artistic techniques with confidence and ease.
- The analysis of the questionnaire data submitted by parents indicates that almost all parents believe that pupils enjoy school. Analysis of the data from pupil questionnaires also reflect high levels of positivity in relation to learning with particularly high usage of computers noted.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is very good with some exemplary practice noted. Well-structured lessons and high quality interactions between teachers and pupils are a consistent feature of practice in this school. Teachers provide appropriate oral and written feedback to support ongoing improvement in pupils' learning.
- *Cé go n-úsáideann na múinteoirí cur chuige incriminteach d'fhorbairt scileanna teanga na ndaltaí i nGaeilge, is gá an t-abhar teanga ag gach rang leibhéal a leathnú. Chuirfeadh monatóireacht níos cruinne ar an dul chun cinn a dhéanann na daltaí ina scileanna labhartha go mór lena gcuid foghlama.* While teachers adopt an incremental approach to the development of pupils' language skills in Irish, there remains scope to enhance the language content at each class level. Closer monitoring of the progression in pupils' speaking skills will optimise their learning.

- There is strong linkage between planning and assessment practices; teachers gather and use information from a variety of sources to plan their lessons. They skilfully deploy a suitable range of teaching approaches and resources to engage pupils in learning activities that enable the development of a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- A number of team-teaching models has been successfully developed and adopted to facilitate inclusive, enriching, learning experiences in literacy and numeracy for pupils with additional learning needs. 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 ensure suitable continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

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

- Support for pupils' well-being is very good. A positive and nurturing culture has been established in the school that reflects a strong emphasis on fostering pupils' positive sense of identity and belonging. A calm atmosphere, characterised by respectful and affirming interactions between pupils and staff, was evident during the evaluation. Pupils' holistic development and well-being is enhanced by their engagement in suitable co-curricular activities such as the Green Schools and Junior Entrepreneur programmes. Pupils report positively about their engagement in the school's pupil council and its impact on decision-making and communication skills within the school community. The majority of the pupils reported that they like school in the questionnaires distributed during the evaluation inspection.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management and the leadership team in the school fulfil the range of responsibilities in a very effective and proactive manner. They demonstrate a strong capacity to identify and respond to the evolving needs of the school community and sustain a strong emphasis on promoting high aspirations for pupils' learning and whole-school development.
- The principal demonstrates very good management and leadership skills. She works collaboratively with the staff and in-school management team; together they have been successful in implementing a significant number of curricular changes that have impacted positively on pupils' learning. Teachers' individual leadership capacities are fostered and a commendable sense of teamwork and shared understanding regarding school practices and priorities are evident.
- The data from the parent questionnaires distributed during the evaluation indicates that almost all parents are satisfied that the school is well run. In the questionnaires, a significant number of parents either disagree or don't know if they have been informed of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy. Renewed efforts should be made by school management to ensure that parents are aware of this policy. The board of management should consider strengthening the measures taken to consult with the key stakeholders of the school community to garner their perspectives on school experiences and priorities.
- The management and staff of the school facilitate 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 School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is very good. The cyclical six-step process has been used very effectively as a process to identify, implement and monitor a number of valuable improvement initiatives in literacy and numeracy. Teachers continue to embed these effective strategies at whole-school and class level to ensure a sustained benefit for the pupils' learning. The staff in the school has identified oral language as a focus area for the next phase of school self-evaluation; school leaders have used the Department of Education (DES) publication *Looking at Our Schools (2016)* to inform their thinking and professional reflection as they gather and analyse relevant information and devise an appropriate action plan. Sustaining and extending the involvement of parents and pupils 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 of Ballinlough N.S. greatly appreciate the very positive findings in the WSE-MLL Report. We feel that it is a good reflection of the commitment and dedication of our very conscientious and hardworking staff. We are pleased that the very high standards of teaching and learning, management and leadership and pupils' achievement have been recognised and affirmed. The Board of Management is delighted that the support for pupils' well-being is noted and praised.

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 accepts the recommendations made in the report and will endeavour to work together with the principal and staff to implement these recommendations comprehensively over the next 12 months to further enhance teaching and learning in our school. We are currently reviewing our approach to the teaching of spellings throughout the school.

We will continue to further develop progression in levels of spoken Irish throughout the school.

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;