

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

**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning**

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	San Isadóir
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bothar Leathan Cashel Co Tipperary
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	026701

Date of inspection: 20-09-2017



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. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	20-09-2017
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• Meeting with representatives of the Green Schools' committee• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent and pupil 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

Scoil San Isadóir is a rural, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cashel and Emlý. The school has four mainstream class teachers and the special educational needs team is comprised of one full-time and one shared teacher. The school has an enrolment of one hundred pupils and overall attendance levels are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupil learning is very good with meaningful, authentic connections consistently made between school-based learning and learning about the local community.
- Very good quality teaching was observed across a range of lessons in both mainstream and special education settings and teachers create inclusive, pupil-centred learning environments.
- While the overall quality of assessment is good, with very good practice noted in literacy, there is scope to direct greater focus towards assessment in Mathematics.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is excellent.
- The principal is a highly effective leader who empowers teachers to develop and implement effective teaching strategies.
- The school has engaged in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and there is evidence that the agreed targets and actions are having a positive impact on teaching and learning in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Renewed focus should be directed towards the assessment of learning outcomes in Mathematics and this should inform the implementation of intervention initiatives to further improve attainment in this subject area.
- Is gá plean straitéiseach forbartha don Ghaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm ina bhfuil spriocanna teanga cinnte leagtha amach do gach leibhéal ranga. *The school should devise a strategic, developmental whole-school plan in which language attainment targets are outlined for each class level.*

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. The pupils are highly motivated and they demonstrate excellent capacity in collaborative and cooperative learning. Pupils contribute competently to regular peer discussion and interact with each other in a most respectful manner. A deep sense of identity is successfully fostered amongst the pupils through extensive exploration of local history, pupil-led involvement in environmental issues and purposeful visits from members of the community.

In English, a range of writing genres is addressed systematically and pupils read with fluency and expression. Their expressive language is of a high quality and they provide rich reflective responses to a range of questions. Aistear: *The Early childhood Curriculum Framework* is used successfully to develop playful, language-rich interactions where peer learning is carefully cultivated. Effective speaker-listener relationships are advanced in a child-centred learning environment.

Léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Tá tuiscint mhaith agus foclóir leathan acu. Aithrisíonn said raon leathan dánta agus rannta de ghlanmheabhair. *The pupils display a positive attitude to Irish. They demonstrate good understanding and have a wide vocabulary. They recite a wide range of songs and poems from memory.*

Learning in Mathematics is supported through the provision of a maths rich environment in classrooms and in the immediate school environment. Effective use is made of concrete materials to deepen pupils' conceptual understanding. Opportunities provided to the pupils to communicate mathematical understanding are having a positive impact on their engagement in learning.

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education enhances the overall quality of pupils' learning. Significant emphasis is placed on the development of the pupils' skills in contextualising, connecting and presenting their learning. These skills are incrementally developed through examination of artefacts in History, experimentation in Science and exploration of the local environment in Geography. Positive attitudes towards the immediate environment are cultivated through maintaining links with the local historical society and engagement with the Green Schools' initiative.

Pupils demonstrate an understanding of musical concepts through listening, song singing and playing instruments. They have ample opportunities to listen and respond to music. Musical performance is a regular feature in classrooms and the pupils participate in national musical initiatives. Individual musical expertise is nourished and celebrated.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

In general, the quality of teaching is of a very high standard. Practice was most effective when teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning. In these settings pupils were encouraged to engage in, extend and enjoy their learning. All teachers prepare comprehensively for lessons and they are particularly commended for the emphasis placed on learner outcomes. Collective, collaborative practice is a feature of teaching in this school and this is having a positive impact on learners.

The teaching of English is characterised by effective teacher-questioning, the use of pupil ideas to generate classroom discussion and some valuable modelling of expressive language. The communicative element of language is prioritised and strong emphasis is placed on confident oral expression. Pupils are afforded meaningful opportunities to apply their oral language skills when presenting their learning in other classrooms, participating in *Green Schools'* committees and partaking in community dramatic productions.

Cé gur leagtar béim ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach sa Ghaeilge, tá gá anois lean straitéiseach forbartha go Ghaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm. Ba chóir spriocanna teanga cinnte a leagadh amach do gach leibhéal ranga chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. *While emphasis is placed on the communicative approach in Irish, there is now a need for a strategic, developmental Irish plan. This plan should outline language targets for each class level in order to further develop the pupils' conversational skills.*

In Mathematics, teachers use a variety of active methodologies to create engaging learning experiences for pupils. The implementation of agreed whole-school approaches to operations, mathematical language and problem-solving strategies results in coherent learning experiences for the pupils. Opportunities for pupils to share their thinking and to discuss and describe mathematical processes were evident where practice was highly effective.

The overall quality of assessment is good. Pupils' work in copybooks is very well monitored and they are provided with formative feedback on their written work. Consistent implementation of monitoring processes at whole-school level results in successful identification of pupils in need of further support in literacy. It is now recommended that the focus of assessment be directed towards Mathematics. It is advised that a greater emphasis be placed on assessment at junior level and that support frameworks be introduced in response to identified needs, including those of accelerated learners. This process may involve the introduction of new initiatives and a review of the balance between literacy and numeracy provision in special education contexts.

The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is of a very good standard. Effective consultative processes exist between classroom and support teachers. High expectations for learner achievement is a particularly commendable feature of practice in special educational needs settings. Pupils are empowered to see themselves as agents in their own learning. They are actively encouraged to develop a sense of ownership of their work and to take responsibility for improvement. A dynamic and reflective approach to provision ensures that allocation of support to pupils is based on identified and emerging needs.

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

The quality of support for pupils' well-being is excellent. The school community is dedicated to ensuring that a sense of well-being permeates all aspects of school life. Very positive relationships exist between pupils and teachers. Responses to questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation indicate that pupils are positively disposed towards their school.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

High quality school leadership and management is evident in the school. The board of management demonstrates a strong level of support for pupils and teachers and is well informed on school activities and initiatives. The board is committed to ensuring that the school is very well resourced and maintained.

The principal demonstrates an excellent capacity to lead the school and to manage the sustained progression of standards in teaching and learning. She promotes continuous improvement by actively encouraging professional reflection and the development of a community of practice at whole-school level. The deputy principal is highly effective in her role and is proactive in maintaining a guiding vision for the school.

The parents' association actively supports the work of the school. Representatives of the association conveyed a deep interest in all aspects of school life. In questionnaire responses, almost all parents agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that the school is well run.

4. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

The school has demonstrated high levels of engagement in implementing action plans for school improvement. A systematic and collaborative approach has been adopted to support this work. Areas for improvement have been identified through comprehensive data analysis and through analysis of responses to parent questionnaires. Resultantly, learner-improvement initiatives have been implemented. To further progress the work in School Self-Evaluation (SSE), it is advised that renewed focus be directed towards mathematical attainment.

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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;