An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Birdhill National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Birdhill Killaloe County Tipperary
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	13991Q
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	08-03-2023

What is a 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' wellbeing
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; a response was not received from the board.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the Procedures) since the previous report to the board.
3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.
4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.
5. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and</td></tr>
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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). 8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.	responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	06-03-2023 - 08-03-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Meetings with acting principal and in-school leadership team • Meeting with representatives of the board of management • Meeting with parent nominees on the board • Meeting with special education teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus group	• Analysis of parent and pupil surveys • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to acting principal, teachers and board of management representative

School context

Birdhill National School is a co-educational primary school that operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. The school has experienced significant growth and change in enrolment and staffing in recent years. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an acting administrative principal. Two other members of the in-school leadership team were also in an acting capacity. The school had five mainstream teachers, three special education teachers (SETs) and two classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs). Another SET worked part-time in the school. There were 121 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good.
- The overall quality of teaching was good; teachers collaborated effectively to improve learner outcomes.
- Support for pupils' wellbeing was of a very high quality; a welcoming, positive and inclusive school culture was evident.
- The overall quality of leadership and management was good; the acting principal has been very effective in managing the organisation and promoting a culture of improvement.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) was of a good quality overall.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide appropriately challenging learning activities for all pupils, in particular pupils of high ability.
- Teachers should ensure that all lessons provide opportunities for pupils to develop their critical thinking skills through high-quality discussion.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good. During the lessons observed, most pupils were motivated to learn and were engaged in their learning. They presented as confident and capable learners who demonstrated very good ability to work independently and collaboratively. Assessment data indicated that the majority of pupils were making good progress in literacy and numeracy. In the pupil survey, all pupils agreed that the school helps them to achieve good standards in their learning.
- The majority of pupils were competent in sharing their learning across curricular areas. They enjoyed sharing their learning from project work in History and Science. Their knowledge of the local environment was limited. Pupils' skills in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) should be further developed through the exploration of the local environment.
- Pupils demonstrated good literacy skills. The majority of pupils read with very good fluency and expression in English and had a very good understanding of grammar and the conventions of print. They spoke knowledgably about writing in a range of genres. While the majority of pupils could apply some comprehension strategies, there was a need for further whole-school co-ordination of the development of comprehension strategies.
- Ar an iomlán, léirigh formhór na ndaltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Bhí raon leathan dánta agus rann ar eolas ag daltaí i ranganna áirithe. Bhí struchtúr abairte, foghraíocht agus láimhseáil na mbriathra ar chaighdeán maith ag formhór na ndaltaí. Ba chóir scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ar bhonn scoile uile. *Overall, the majority of pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to Irish. In certain classes, pupils knew a wide range of poems and rhymes. Sentence structure, pronunciation and the use of verbs were of a good standard in the majority of cases. There is a need to develop pupils' oral skills more systematically at whole-school level.*
- In some classes, pupils' cross-curricular literacy was of a good standard. All teachers should ensure that pupils' ability to discuss their learning using subject-specific language is developed. In junior classes, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills were developed very effectively through play and thematic approaches. Pupils' presentation of their work in copybooks was of a very high quality, overall.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics was good. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of mathematical concepts and could explain their thinking.
- Pupils in the focus group reported that they enjoyed using information and communication technologies (ICT) to support their learning. They would welcome further opportunities to play musical instruments and engage in learning in the outdoors.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching was good. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. All teachers prepared effectively for lessons and used a range of teaching methodologies. Teachers should further develop pupils' reasoning skills through problem-solving approaches. During the lessons observed, pupils had limited opportunities to engage in discussion. Teachers should ensure that all lessons provide opportunities for pupils to develop their critical thinking skills through high-quality discussion.
- In some lessons, learning activities were differentiated to support pupils' learning. Challenging learning tasks for pupils of high ability were limited. Teachers should provide appropriately challenging learning activities for all pupils, in particular pupils of high ability.

- Provision of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) was of a high quality. Teachers worked collaboratively to improve learner outcomes. Resources and initiatives were very well targeted to support pupils through both in-class and withdrawal models of support. It was evident that practice was in accordance with the National Educational Psychological Service's (NEPS) *Continuum of Support* model. The majority of targets were clear, specific, and based on assessment data. Pupils' progress in relation to the targets should be measured and recorded in their files.
- School leadership has established structures to support very inclusive practices for pupils with ASDs, including integration with mainstream classes. Learning environments provided structure and support for pupils and learning programmes were implemented effectively. In the survey for parents of pupils in the special classes, all parents agreed that they were aware of the learning targets for their child.
- The overall quality of assessment was good. Some assessment-for-learning (AfL) strategies were observed. Teachers should further develop AfL strategies to support pupils in reflecting purposefully on their learning. The practice of providing written formative feedback should be extended to all classes.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- Support for pupils' wellbeing was of a very high quality. A welcoming, positive and inclusive school culture was in evidence, with very respectful interactions between teachers and pupils, and between pupils and their peers. In the pupil survey, all pupils agreed that they felt safe and cared for in school.
- A student council has been elected democratically. It was reported that the council meets with a member of the in-school leadership team on a termly basis. There was evidence that the school leadership listens to pupils' voice and that some of the student council's suggestions have been implemented.
- The introduction of Lámh, the manual sign system, at whole-school level to support communication with all pupils is highly commendable.
- Senior pupils and parent nominees on the board of management reported very good support for pupils' transition to post-primary schools. This included visits from post-primary school leaders, exploration of timetables, and the introduction of lockers.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The overall quality of leadership and management was good. The board of management communicated a very clear vision for learning and for the development of school infrastructure. The board demonstrated support for continuing professional development (CPD) for staff and had invested in high-quality levelled readers and ICT to support teaching and learning. In parent surveys, almost all parents agreed that the school was well run and that they felt welcome there. Survey responses indicated that the board should seek the views of parents on school matters more regularly.
- The acting principal has been very effective in managing the organisation and in promoting a culture of improvement. There was evidence that she responded very effectively to significant changes in school enrolment and staffing in recent years. Systems to support staff communication have been established.
- The members of the in-school leadership team had adopted various roles to support teaching and learning. There was evidence that they were meeting regularly and working collaboratively. Areas for improvement had been identified and teachers were supported in developing their practice. School leadership should monitor the impact of agreed whole-school strategies more closely.
- The school reported that it provides placements for student teachers.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- School self-evaluation (SSE) was of a good quality overall. Areas for improvement had been identified and actions agreed to support improvement. There was evidence that these actions were impacting positively on teaching and learning.
- The school should involve parents and pupils more in the school improvement process. More specific targets should be identified in school improvement plans.

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
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 *very good* 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;