An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

Report

REPORTPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Moate Community School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Church Street Moate Co Westmeath
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91501L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	08-03-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	29/05/2023

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. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

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.

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.

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.
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.</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 students.
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 responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.</td></tr>
</table>

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.	

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

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Date of inspection	6th – 8th March 2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with Board of Management • Meetings with principal and deputy principals • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus groups	• Meeting with parent representatives of the board of management • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Moate Community School is a co-educational, multi-denominational post-primary school, operating under the trusteeship of the Carmelite Fathers, the Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust and Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board. The current enrolment is 852 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school also has four special classes for students with autism. Moate Business College is also under the governance of the school's board of management, however, this provision was not evaluated as part of this inspection.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was very good.
- Throughout the evaluation students displayed a very positive attitude towards learning; a very supportive, caring and mutually respectful atmosphere was evident in all interactions between teachers and students.
- The overall quality of leadership in the school was good; aspects of the management of the school were satisfactory.
- The school is an integral and valued part of the local community and the trustees, management and staff are highly committed to providing an educational environment that serves the needs and aspirations of all students within the community.
- The school has a strong culture of reflective practice and good capacity for development and improvement.
- The quality of support for students' wellbeing was good. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the school that celebrated student achievements and showcased students' successes.

Recommendations

- In a significant minority of junior cycle subject plans there was an over-reliance on a chapter-based approach to lesson planning. To progress subject planning, subject teams should collaboratively develop units of learning that reflect junior cycle specifications and incorporate assessment tasks with clear success criteria.
- Imbalances in time allocated to subject areas, curricular deficits and the incorrect use of SEN resources were identified during the inspection. To address these issues, senior management should lead a comprehensive review of the school's curriculum and timetable.
- At the time of the evaluation, a strategic plan had been developed but no action plan was in place for implementing and monitoring progress of these priorities. The board

should oversee the development of an action plan to assist in the implementation, monitoring and review of the priorities.

- Aspects of the current schedule of posts of responsibility do not meet the current and emerging needs of the school. A review of the school's post structure should therefore be conducted in line with *Circular letter 0003/2018.*
- A significant minority of teachers were scheduled one period of supervision per week from the school's teaching allocation. School management should ensure that supervision and substitution arrangements applied by the school are separated from the teaching allocation.
- The approach to the provision and teaching of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme with senior cycle students is not in line with best practice. The provision and teaching of RSE for senior students should be reviewed and updated.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of teaching and learning

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was very good.

Overall students' learning experiences were very good. Students displayed very positive attitudes towards learning and were motivated to engage in all class activities. Student behaviour was exemplary throughout the evaluation. All lessons were characterised by mutually respectful interactions between teachers and students.

Learning intentions were appropriately shared at the start of lessons. In the majority of lessons, the intentions aligned with the activities and assessment approaches and built on or connected with previous learning. Highly effective practice was observed, in a few lessons, where intentions were differentiated and success criteria were shared or co-created before students engaged with the learning tasks. In these lessons, students demonstrated very good subject knowledge and were facilitated to make quality judgements on their work. This approach, gave them a clear sense of ownership of their learning.

Very good reflective learning experiences were noted in a significant minority of lessons where student reflection sheets were used. These promoted greater student autonomy and responsibility for their learning by setting personal goals and by identifying areas for improvement.

In the majority of lessons, students demonstrated high levels of interest and participation in learning when they were given opportunities to learn together. Where collaborative activities were most effective students worked purposefully, with clear goals, assigned roles and with appropriately time-bound targets for the completion of tasks.

In a few lessons, supportive peer assessment was observed. In these instances, teachers effectively modelled how to critique work and they guided students to work co-operatively to edit and improve their work. The use of these very good practices should be extended.

Overall, very good student learning and engagement was observed in the autism classes (Uisneach Centre). Learning outcomes were very good when lesson content and teaching approaches were tailored to meet the needs and interests of the learners. Highly effective learning was noted when students were facilitated to make authentic connections between their learning in class and real-life situations.

Teachers individual and collective practice

Teachers had excellent subject knowledge and classroom management skills. In the majority of lessons, teachers demonstrated a very good understanding of students' learning needs and they set high expectations for attainment.

In the majority of lessons, very effective teacher preparedness was observed. In these lessons teachers effectively used introductory activities to connect students' prior learning and the intended learning being introduced. These activities required students to recall information, analyse images or video clips, and, through the effective use of differentiated questions, challenged learners to think critically. This effective approach to lesson design also facilitated students to make connections with learning in other subject areas.

An effective integrated approach to language teaching was noted in lessons, where the development of key skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing and communicating was evident. In all language lessons visited, teachers modelled very good use of the target language and facilitated a range of collaborative tasks to build the students' confidence in the use of the language.

A scenario-based approach to learning was used in a small number of lessons. This approach was most effective in a few instances when talk and discussion were built around the characters in the scenario rather than personal experiences. This highly effective approach, created a distance between the student and subject content and created a safer learning environment to explore sensitive issues. Teachers should share practice in relation to the use of scenario-based learning.

Teachers monitored progress through effective questioning and observation during lessons. In most lessons questioning was used in a stimulating way and a variety of differentiated questioning strategies were deployed. These approaches encouraged active student participation and facilitated exploration of the concepts taught. In a minority of lessons there was an overuse of whole-class questioning, and students not answering questions remained passive, were reluctant to respond or were not sufficiently challenged. It is advised that teachers in these instances plan for and use a balanced approach to questioning so as to ensure that the learning of individual students is more actively supported.

A review of students' copybooks showed good evidence of teacher monitoring of students work, particularly on test scripts, in most lessons. This feedback was most effective when teachers provided written formative comments that enabled students to make improvements. To further develop this practice and to support students to take greater responsibility for their learning teachers should consider how students record and act upon the oral feedback given during lessons.

Subject planning was well established and good collaborative plans were available electronically. It was noted that in a significant minority of junior cycle subject plans there was an over-reliance on a chapter-based approach to lesson planning. To further progress subject planning, it is recommended that subject teams collaboratively develop units of learning that reflect junior cycle specifications and incorporate assessment tasks with clear success criteria.

2. Quality of school leadership and management

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership of learning and teaching was good. The school is an integral and valued part of the local community and the trustees, management and staff are highly committed to providing an educational environment that serves the needs and aspirations of all students within the community.

The school provided education for students in a caring and supportive environment. Students were offered a broad range of subjects and programmes. To support first year students to make informed subject choices the school had subject sampling in place. Commendably, new subjects and programmes had been introduced to meet the evolving interests and needs of students such as, Junior Cycle Level Two Learning Programmes, Leaving Certificate Computer Science and Physical Education (PE), and the LCA programme. The school placed a strong emphasis on providing students with digital skills and all students in Junior Cycle and TY were provided with computer classes.

A number of deficits were identified, in relation to the allocation of teaching resources, on the school's timetable. History has special core status as part of the Junior Cycle Framework and all students are required to study History from September 2020. However, not all students in second and third year were timetabled for History. Additionally, CSPE as part of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme, was not provided to second and third year students. There was also an imbalance in the allocation of tuition time across some subject areas. It is recommended that a review of the school's curricular provision and timetabling be conducted to address the imbalances in time allocated to subject areas and curricular deficits identified in this report.

There has been a practice in the school that requires all students in fifth year to engage with the enterprise and work experience modules of LCVP, regardless of whether they intend to continue with this programme in sixth year. This policy should be reviewed in consultation with students.

In order to receive additional tuition in other subject areas, sixth year students were withdrawn from various subjects including Religious Education (RE), PE and Guidance. This practice should be reviewed to ensure that all students receive their required allocation of tuition time in PE and appropriate provision of Guidance.

A highly engaging and well-structured TY programme was offered. It afforded students opportunities to engage in core subjects, subject sampling, school designed modules and a wide range of co-curricular activities. Students who met with the inspectors were very complimentary about their learning experiences in TY. Students spoke positively about the opportunities they received to experience a wide range of subjects and modules, and to engage with events such as BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition and Junk Kouture.

The school was very committed to supporting students with special educational needs (SEN) both in the autism classes (Uisneach Centre) and in mainstream lessons. A comprehensive inclusion policy was in place. In line with current guidance the school has taken a flexible model of support, employing in-class support, team teaching and individual or small group withdrawal.

During the course of the evaluation students and teachers both raised concerns about the impact of the split break on teaching and learning during lesson period two. It is advised that management consider alternative arrangements in order to avoid the necessity to schedule the break during the lesson. This practice should be reviewed in a consultative manner with teachers and students.

The school had an effective mentoring programme in place to support all new staff. Teachers spoke positively of the value of the mentoring programme in developing their professional practice. Additionally, the school regularly provides placements for student teachers and newly qualified teachers are supported through the Droichead programme.

Managing the organisation

The overall quality of management of the organisation was satisfactory. The board of management were highly committed and had a good understanding of their governance role, in terms of policy setting and supporting senior management. The board has appropriately overseen the development of a strategic plan which identified key priorities for school development. At the time of the evaluation, no action plan had been developed for implementing these priorities and monitoring progress. It is recommended that the board oversee the development an action plan to assist in the implementation, monitoring and review of identified key priorities.

The board was kept well informed about school life by the principal; however, there was limited communication between the board and the general body of parents and at the time of the evaluation they had no communication with the student council. The board should consider how it reports on the operation of the school to the school community. An agreed report of board meetings should be presented in writing to staff, parents and the student council. A dedicated section on the website would be a useful means of facilitating enhanced communication.

The senior management team (SMT) comprises the principal and three deputy principals. The principal and deputy principals adopt a partnership approach to leadership and the day-to-day management of the school. They were highly committed to providing a holistic education for all

students, in a caring environment and endeavour to be accessible to parents, staff and students.

Responsibilities for various aspects of school provision were distributed among a middle-management team, all of whom had a schedule of assigned duties. It was evident that the duties attached to a significant minority of posts do not meet the current needs of the school. It is recommended that a review of the post of responsibilities is conducted in accordance *with Circular letter 0003/2018* to meet both the school's current and its emerging needs.

It was noted that as part of teachers' timetables a significant minority of teachers were scheduled one period of supervision per week. It was confirmed that these class periods were allocated from the school's teaching resource as assigned by the Department. It is recommended that the supervision and substitution arrangements applied by the school should be separate from the teaching allocation, to ensure teaching and learning is delivered in the most effective way.

Significant resources were allocated to the school by the National Council for Special Education. At the time of the evaluation, it was confirmed that not all of the resources allocated for students with SEN were being used for their intended purpose. In addition, a number of practices related to the deployment of these resources needed to be reviewed. The grouping of students who were exempted from Irish should be revisited to ensure their specific individual needs are addressed in a targeted manner. A number of teachers have a range of qualifications related to special education teaching (SET). While the skillset is put to good use in the autism classes, other students identified on the school provision plan receive support from a wide range of teachers and this provision is not always adequately aligned with their individual needs. This approach should be refined to ensure that provision is skilfully aligned with students' needs.

While very good practices were in place in the Uisneach centre to monitor the outcomes of individual students, these practices were not consistent for other students with additional needs who attend mainstream classes. All resources allocated for special education teaching should be used in line with the requirements of *Circular letter 0014/2017* and the associated *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.

Leading school development

The school's capacity for development and improvement was good and there was a strong culture of reflective practice amongst staff.

The school's self-evaluation (SSE) process was used effectively to reflect and identify areas for development. An SSE team had been formed and was effectively leading their new approach to SSE based on three pillars: student and teacher voice, community of practice, and a whole school approach to developing teaching and teaching. At the time of the evaluation the committee was engaged in gathering and analysing data from staff and students in relation to teaching and learning. The committee intended that the findings would be presented to the whole staff in order to agree areas for improvement which would inform the school improvement plan for 2023-26.

As part of their new approach to SSE a sub-committee had been set up, to oversee the review and development of new school policies. There was limited consultation with staff and parents and the student body was not consulted regarding the sub-committee's review and development of school policies. It is recommended that the perspectives of all stakeholders should be considered in the development and review of school policies.

An effective digital transformation plan was enacted over the past number of years to oversee the development of digital infrastructure, procurement of equipment and upskilling of teachers. This plan was awaiting review to reflect the current needs of the school. In addition, the school was implementing a new digital academic tracking and monitoring system. During meetings with the inspection team, staff recognised that there was a need to link the work of the various working groups together under the umbrella of SSE to create a coherent structure that aligns with the strategic plan.

The quality of school communication was good overall. Students and staff were familiar with the content of school policies. Parents were informed about general school activities and events

through the use of email, the school website and letters. Survey responses indicated parents felt welcomed in the school and school management are committed to exploring different approaches to encouraging parents to get more involved in the school.

Developing leadership capacity

The overall development of leadership capacity was good. In addition to post holders, the SMT distributed significant leadership responsibilities to other staff who had a demonstrated a keen interest in projects that would enhance teaching and learning in the school. In this context, a number of staff, have commendably volunteered and have taken on leadership roles in areas of high importance in relation to curriculum and learning, student support and school improvement.

Staff were very proactive in engaging with subject specific continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. High levels of staff engagement with CPD was noted. It was evident from reviewing subject planning documentation and from discussions with staff that there is an openness and willingness to share practice with others to meet the needs of students. Building on this good practice and to support the implementation and review of whole school teaching and learning targets, subject department meetings should include learning and teaching on the agenda of their meetings. In order to support this work further, subject department teams should develop action plans to support on-going development of teaching and learning in their subject areas that support whole-school targets.

Commendably, opportunities for student leadership were provided to students across all year groups. There was a democratically elected student's council that comprises both a junior and senior council, senior prefects and senior mentors. A range of additional student committees connected to a variety of extra-curricular activities were also in place. It was noted that the main role of prefects was supervisory duties at break and lunch. There is scope to explore further the leadership potential of prefects and student council members as a means of enhancing student participation in the school in a meaningful and purposeful manner.

3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

Overall, the quality of support for students' wellbeing was good. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the school that celebrated student achievements and showcased students' successes. The school was an integral part of the community and students had contributed pieces of artwork for local recreational areas. The school had invested in bicycles to utilise the local amenities as learning spaces, to extend learning beyond the classroom.

The dedication of staff to providing a wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities was highly commendable. A vibrant programme of activities enhanced the quality of learner experiences and students were encouraged to participate in a variety of events such as SciFest, choral, orchestral and sporting competitions. In discussion with the inspection team, students noted that there was something available for all interests if they wished to get involved. These activities were very beneficial in supporting students to develop independent learning skills and positive dispositions towards a range of subjects.

There were effective structures in place to support students' wellbeing. These included strong lines of communication and regular meetings between SMT, year heads, the pastoral care and referral teams. Students demonstrated good awareness and appreciated the accessibility of the supports available to them through the chaplaincy service and the sixth year mentoring programme.

A comprehensive whole-school Guidance policy was in place. The approach reflected a co-ordinated structure for delivering personal, educational and vocational guidance to students in most year groups. As Guidance is a core component of TY, it should be formally embedded within the programme.

A tutor system was in place for all year groups. In some year groups, a tutor class was timetabled, whereas in others, administrative tasks were conducted by tutors in lessons such as Maths or SPHE. It was evident from lesson observations and from discussions with teachers and students that this approach did not provide adequate time to meaningfully engage with the pastoral needs

of students. As part of the ongoing development of the school's Wellbeing programme consideration should be given to the purpose of tutor time, and a programme of learning for timetabled tutor classes should be agreed.

Data arising out of surveys with students as part of the evaluation indicated that the majority of students feel safe and cared for in school. Questionnaire data and discussions with students also indicated that while they were aware of the anti-bullying procedures, the role of the bystander and what action can be taken should be explored in more depth during lessons.

RSE was appropriately incorporated into the SPHE programme for junior cycle students. For senior cycle students RSE was provided as part of RE. In sixth year, students who do not study RE are withdrawn from PE to engage with an online module. This approach to provision of RSE is not in line with best practice. Discussions with students and questionnaire data from students and parents, indicated there was scope for improvement in how RSE was taught. In this context, current provision for RSE and practices for delivering this programme should be revised and updated. Furthermore, timetabling for senior RSE should happen earlier in the year to ensure students can appropriately engage in a meaningful way with the programme.

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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management discussed the report at its meeting on 2nd May last.

The Board welcomed the Report.

The Board also thanked the staff and students for their full cooperation not just during the inspection but throughout the years. As a result of this commitment, together with the trusted leadership of our Principal and Deputy Principals, our school, together with our Business College, enjoys a great reputation, achieves outstanding examination results, has a booming enrolment and has won numerous very prestigious awards to University, and awards in the areas of Science, Art, Music, Debating, and in a variety of sports.

We are proud of these achievements and acknowledge with deep appreciation the professionalism, dedication and hard work required to make all this possible.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board plans to take immediate action to address all of the recommendations as detailed in the Report.

Following the meeting, senior management of the school commenced the process with a detailed examination of the steps necessary.

Detailed discussions will now take place with all relevant stakeholders and action plans will be drawn up and acted on.

A number of recommendations will be acted on immediately. Others, which require further exploration and consensus, will be dealt with in the coming school year.

The Board wishes to state that it aspires to good practice at all times.