An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Aodháin Naofa
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bawnboy County Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19679V

Date of inspection: 24-01-2018

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(s) 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; a response was not received from the board.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

Dates of inspection	24-01-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • 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	• 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 Náisiúnta Aodháin Naofa is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. The school has three mainstream teachers and one part-time special education teacher who is based in another school. There has been a slight decrease in enrolment figures in recent years. The attendance patterns of the sixty-five pupils enrolled are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The learning achievements of pupils are good overall with very effective learning experiences provided for pupils in most lessons observed; there were limited opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool during lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; there is a lack of cohesion in teachers' approaches to assessment and the current provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) does not meet the full range of pupils' specific learning needs.
- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good.
- School leadership and management are commendable overall; the board of management works purposefully, and the principal and in-school leadership team carry out their duties diligently to ensure that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The board of management and teachers are highly committed to building and maintaining relationships with parents and the wider school community to provide pupils with high-quality facilities and resources to extend learning.
- The school is in the process of re-engaging with the self-evaluation (SSE) process; the good impact of SSE work undertaken prior to the teachers' union directive is evident in classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers and the board should work collaboratively to develop the e-learning plan with a view to exploring further opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a learning tool.
- Provision for pupils with SEN should be reviewed to ensure best practice regarding programme planning and organisation, and monitoring and recording of individual pupil progress.
- Assessment should be guided by a comprehensive whole-school policy, and should be broadened to include *assessment for learning* (AfL).

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning is good overall. In most lessons observed, pupils demonstrated high levels of interest in their learning and had a clear sense of attainable learning outcomes. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning and all parents agreed that their child is doing well in school.
- In Visual Arts, pupils have produced very high-quality work in the areas of fabric and fibre and paint and colour. They are confident in discussing and making connections between their own work and the work of artists.
- Infant pupils' attainment of learning outcomes through play-based learning experiences is effective. There is scope for pupils to use a wider range of natural and open-ended materials to support their engagement in exploring and thinking. Their language and communication skills would be further enhanced through more focused engagement in socio-dramatic play.
- In musical performances observed during the evaluation, the school choir sang competently and confidently and pupils' playing of the tin-whistle was very accomplished.
- Pupils displayed very good ability in transferring and applying skills learned in one context to another as they presented their learning about integrated projects of work in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. They demonstrate highly commendable knowledge of their local area, enriched by their use of artefacts and participation in meaningful fieldwork.
- During the lessons observed, there were limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a learning tool. Teachers and the board should work collaboratively to develop the e-learning plan with a view to providing further opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning. *The Digital Learning Framework for Primary Schools* would provide further guidance regarding how digital technology can best meet the needs of all learners.
- Tá sé ar chumas na ndaltaí cumarsáid a dhéanamh go han-mhaith i nGaeilge trí scéalta gearra a insint ag úsáid sraith briathra i nGaeilge. Bíonn deiseanna tairbheacha acu an teanga nuafhoghlamtha a dhaingniú trí athchleachtadh rialta a dhéanamh i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla. *Pupils have the ability to communicate very well in Irish by telling short stories using a series of verbs. The pupils have beneficial opportunities to consolidate the newly developed language through regular repetition in different contexts.*

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall. All teachers create attractive, stimulating learning environments and they generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour.
- Teachers are to be highly commended for their collective emphasis on developing pupils' problem-solving skills in Mathematics and for their collaborative efforts in providing pupils with ample opportunities to read and write in a wide range of genre in both Irish and English.
- The quality of provision for pupils with SEN was found to be satisfactory. Support teaching is delivered in a variety of modes and observed teacher-pupil interactions were very respectful and affirming. The school's practice of deploying special education teaching hours for the purposes of whole-class teaching should be ceased. It is recommended that greater use be made of diagnostic testing and assessment data, including recommendations from professional reports, to inform the development of learning programmes that address pupils' specific learning needs. Targets in individual education plans should be more specific and measurable, to provide for more ready monitoring of pupil attainment. It is advised that

school management encourages special education teachers to engage in relevant continuous professional development.

- Teachers' classroom planning is of good quality; further clarity is advised with regard to differentiation of learning in a few classes. Future reviews of whole-school curriculum plans should place additional emphasis on further delineation of teaching approaches and content reflective of the multi-grade context.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory; there is scope for a more cohesive whole-school approach in this area. Individual teachers have compiled a wide range of summative assessment data in English and Mathematics. Deeper analysis of this data is required; the resultant information should be used more effectively to inform early intervention strategies and team teaching. Assessment should be guided by a comprehensive whole-school policy, and should be broadened to include a more incremental approach to teachers' use of AfL.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. The emphasis on developing positive attitudes towards healthy eating and regular physical fitness is highly commendable. The principal and teachers have participated in courses to attend successfully to their own wellbeing, as well as that of pupils.
- All teachers demonstrate very effective classroom management skills. Pupil behaviour was excellent during the evaluation. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, all pupils agreed that there are clear rules against hurting others and almost all parents agreed that their child is treated fairly and respectfully.
- The board and teachers foster a commitment to the holistic development of each pupil. Pupils have access to a very wide variety of co-curricular activities. Initiatives have been introduced to cultivate pupils' global citizenship skills and their developing sense of responsibility as custodians of the earth.
- A strong sense of community permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils participate in a broad range of community events and visiting speakers enrich their learning experiences. Their self-esteem is fostered in many ways, including school assemblies that celebrate pupils' achievements.
- Building on the existing democratic culture that exists within the school, consideration should be given to the establishment of a pupil council to facilitate the development of pupil participation and pupil leadership in relevant decision-making.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is good overall. The board, in collaboration with the very supportive parents' association, has been proactive in developing school infrastructure and provides a well-resourced educational environment for pupils. Minutes of board meetings are maintained and school accounts are certified annually. In recent years, the board has met four times a year. It should meet at least five times a year in accordance with guidelines in the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019.*
- Positive lines of communication are fostered within the school community. Building on this good practice, the in-school leadership team should be provided with opportunities to report progress on its duties to the board so that pupils' learning becomes a more central feature of the board's discussion. It is advised that the board share information about its work through the circulation of agreed reports at regular intervals to parents.

- The principal is very committed to extending the range of learning experiences provided for pupils. The principal and in-school leadership team demonstrate very good teamwork and distributed leadership is a strong feature of practice. All leaders undertake their duties diligently and conscientiously. In the next review of leadership duties, the co-ordination of provision for pupils with SEN should be prioritised.
- The quality of school planning is good overall. The effectiveness of organisational policies is evident in the smooth functioning of the school.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of SSE is good overall. The school is in the process of re-engaging with the SSE process; the effective impact of work undertaken prior to the teachers' union directive is evident in classrooms.
- School improvement plans have been devised for aspects of English, Mathematics and Visual Arts. A review of documentation indicates that there has been very appropriate consultation, involvement and communication throughout the process. In the further development of school improvement plans, there would be value in reviewing and refining targets with regard to learner outcomes.
- Recommendations from a previous incidental inspection have been implemented to good effect, demonstrating the school's high capacity to engage in school improvement.

6. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

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 *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. 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;

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