An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Colmcille
Seoladh na scoile/School address	The Quay Westport County Mayo
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	13145A
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	10/10/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	10/12/2024

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 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.

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 (revised 2023).
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</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) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.
3. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment in line with their current policy.
4. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's current policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.</td></tr>
</table>

Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools (revised 2023). 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, (revised 2023). 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

Dates of inspection	08/10/2024 - 10/10/2024
Inspection activities undertaken • Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team • Meeting with representatives of the board of management • Meeting with parent representatives • Meetings with teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus group	• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interactions with pupils • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

School context

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Colmcille, locally referred to as The Quay School, is a co-educational primary school located in Westport, County Mayo. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an administrative principal and eight mainstream classroom teachers. There were three special education teachers (SETs) and a teacher for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) based in the school. There were 192 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good overall.
- The quality of teaching was very good overall and high-quality learning experiences were provided for the pupils.
- The support for pupils' wellbeing was very effective in creating and fostering a respectful, welcoming, positive and inclusive school culture.
- Use of the outdoor environment was a particular strength of the school.
- The quality of leadership and management was excellent, and it was evident that distributed leadership structures promoted a shared vision of education throughout the school.
- The school engaged very successfully in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

Recommendations

- In order to further develop pupils' oral language skills, a whole-school approach to the teaching of all the oral language genres, including formal oral presentations and debates at all class levels, should be agreed and implemented. This should be done by linking the teaching of the oral and writing genres over a two-year cycle.
- Chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, moltar do gach múinteoir a chinntiú dtugtar deiseanna cainte agus comhrá do gach dalta go luath agus go minic le linn na ceachtanna Gaeilge, go núsáideann siad abairtí iomlána agus go bhfuil siad tumtha sa Ghaeilge, ag seachaint modh an aistriúcháin. Ba chóir córfhreagraí, obair phéire agus obair ghrúpa, chomh maith le dánta, rainn agus amhráin a úsáid, chun tacú leis seo.
  To further develop pupils' speaking skills in Irish, it is recommended that all teachers ensure that all pupils are facilitated to speak and converse early and often in Irish lessons, that they use full sentences and that they are immersed in Irish, avoiding

translation. Choral responses, pair work and group work, as well as poetry, rhymes and songs should be used, to support this.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good, overall. The majority of pupils were very articulate in sharing their learning across the curriculum. In surveys which were administered as part of the evaluation, pupils relayed their enjoyment of reading, noted that their teachers help them improve their work and reported that their homework assists them in understanding what they learn in school.
- Almost all pupils presented as motivated to learn and engaged positively in their learning activities. They demonstrated very good ability to work independently and collaboratively. Assessment data, interactions with the inspectors, and samples of the pupil's work that were reviewed, indicated that pupils were making very good progress in literacy, numeracy and across the primary curriculum. Throughout the school, the presentation of pupils' work in their copybooks was consistently neat and well-organised.
- The pupils' literacy skills were incrementally developed in a very effective manner. Early literacy skills were very well developed, including their understanding of the conventions of print, grammar phonemic and phonological awareness. At all class levels, pupils were very familiar with a range of writing genre frameworks and could discuss their use accurately. They demonstrated good awareness of the reading comprehension strategies. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' social oral language, using the SSE process, was evident in classrooms, in pupils' greetings on the corridors and in the school yard. There was scope to increase the pupils' exposure to poetry and rhymes and their opportunities to compose their own poetry.
- Pupils' learning in Mathematics was very good overall. In the lessons observed, the pupils were enabled to make very good use of learning resources and investigation approaches. The teachers' emphasis on the real-life uses of Mathematics ensured that pupils' understanding and application of concepts were very well developed.
- Léirigh na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus bhí obair scríofa na ndaltaí i nGaeilge go maith. Bhí stór foclóra leathan ag na daltaí, ach ní raibh siad muiníneach i ngach rang ceisteanna a fhreagairt agus cumarsáid a dhéanamh. Chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, moltar do gach múinteoir a chinntiú go dtugtar deiseanna cainte agus comhrá do gach dalta go luath agus go minic le linn na ceachtanna Gaeilge, go n-úsáideann siad abairtí iomlána agus go bhfuil siad tumtha sa Ghaeilge, ag seachaint modh an aistriúcháin. Ba chóir córfhreagraí, obair phéire agus obair ghrúpa, chomh maith le dánta, rainn agus amhráin a úsáid, chun tacú leis seo.
  The pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to Irish and their written work in Irish was good. The pupils had a broad range of vocabulary, but they were not confident in all classes in answering questions and making conversation. To further develop pupils' speaking skills in Irish, it is recommended that all teachers ensure that all pupils are facilitated to speak and converse early and often in Irish lessons, that they use full sentences and that they are immersed in Irish, avoiding translation. Choral responses, pair work and group work, as well as poetry, rhymes and songs should be used, to support this.
- Pupils' digital literacy skills were being developed effectively throughout the school. In the senior classes, the pupils used Google classroom to create project work across the subjects of the curriculum and there were very good samples of digital presentations that the pupils had created.
- The pupils in the focus group spoke of enjoying their lessons across the subjects of the curriculum. They described the variety of musical experiences that they had

including singing and playing tin whistle and stringed instruments. They reported enjoying using the school's digital devices for research and for quiz games. They also outlined the variety of sports and extra-curricular activities which were made available to them by the school.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching was very good. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching included elements that ranged from good to excellent. All teachers had high-quality visible and recorded preparation to support their lessons and they shared the intended learning for the lessons. This helped to maintain a clear focus for the lessons for both the teachers and the pupils.
- Teachers used a wide variety of teaching methodologies, including whole-class teaching, pair and group work, station teaching, and active guided discovery learning. Very effective classroom management approaches were used in almost all classes. Where practice was most effective, teachers clearly communicated the learning intention, utilised pair work effectively and frequently, used questioning to monitor understanding, enabled pupils to self-assess their work, and maintained very high expectations for pupils' learning. These practices should be extended to all lessons. Teachers created print-rich classroom environments which supported pupils in their learning activities. In some cases, there was scope to enhance the learning environment through ensuring that current themes being explored were more visible, and pupils' work, for example reflecting their learning in Mathematics, was on display.
- Talk and discussion were central to all lessons observed. In some classes, opportunities were provided for pupils to make presentations to their peers and to engage in informal debates and discussions on topics of interest appropriate to their age and stage of learning. In order to further develop pupils' oral language skills, a whole-school approach to the teaching of all the oral language genres, including formal oral presentations and debates should be agreed and implemented at all class levels. This should be done by linking the teaching of the oral and writing genres over a two-year cycle.
- High levels of support for differentiated learning were provided in the mainstream classrooms. Literacy Lift-off enabled junior pupils to benefit from reading material at levels appropriate to their individual learning. Guided reading approaches were used in the middle and senior classes to differentiate engagement with novels. Station teaching facilitated small group engagement across other subjects of the curriculum. There was scope to ensure that tasks with higher challenge were available in all lessons for pupils of higher ability.
- Pupils who had been prioritised for additional support by the school's special education team, including pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), received very high-quality provision. Most of the special education team had obtained further qualifications and had engaged in teacher professional learning (TPL) to support their work. Collaboration was a feature of practice, and interventions were underpinned by robust assessment information. There was a good balance between in-class and withdrawal models of support. The practice of pre- and post-testing was very effective in tracking pupils' response to interventions. The continuum of support was implemented, and Student Support Files were in place for pupils identified for support. Where very effective practice was noted, the learning targets in the Student Support Plans were specific and measurable and formed the basis of the written reviews of the progress towards their achievement. This practice should be extended to all support plans.
- The overall quality of assessment was very good. Teachers used effective questioning, linked to the learning intention of the lesson to assess ongoing learning in their lessons. All teachers maintained useful assessment data at classroom level, including checklists of skills and knowledge, and samples of pupils' work.

Commendably, pupils' self-assessment skills were being developed and examples of pupils' self-assessment comments were noted on some samples of work. There were some very good examples of formative written feedback given by teachers to guide pupils in the improvement of their work. This practice should be extended to all classes. The school's practice of analysing the pupils' standardised Mathematics results by strand was very effective in informing whole school approaches to target areas of pupils' learning.

- Teachers used the environment outside the classroom very effectively. Pupils throughout the school spoke very positively about their use of the outdoor environment including, the outdoor classroom, active walkway, learning trails, and the outdoor garden. The school's sensory room and hall were used effectively to support the learning and regulation needs of pupils. School corridors were attractively decorated with artwork bespoke to the location of the school. The displays of pupils' learning and whole school initiatives on the corridors added positively to this. There was scope to add displays in the home languages of pupils with EAL in the classrooms and throughout the school.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was very good. A welcoming and inclusive school culture was evident, where relationships and interactions within the school community were respectful, positive, and conducive to wellbeing. The school embraced diversity and fostered inclusivity, demonstrating a whole-school commitment to creating a culture that supported all pupils. Interactions between teachers, as well as among pupils themselves were very respectful. In response to surveys, parents reported very positively on their child's experiences, with all parents reporting that their child felt safe and well looked after in the school, that the school helped their child's social and personal development, and that their child enjoyed school.
- There were high levels of physical activity reported by the pupils in the focus group, both through curricular Physical Education (PE) and a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoyed their learning in Social Personal and Health Education. The school had achieved the Active Schools Flag and the Amber Flag, demonstrating the school's commitment to a healthy, inclusive environment that supported wellbeing.
- Responses to the pupils' survey indicated that the pupils learned about different kinds of bullying and that they believed the children and adults in the school treated everyone with respect.
- The school supported the development of pupil leadership skills through a variety of committees, such as the Wellbeing Committee, Student Council and Active School's Committee. These committees had effective structures to ensure representation from the pupils at each class level and the focus group reported that ideas originating from these committees had been enacted in the school.
- The school had established excellent systems to support pupils transitioning into the school from local early learning and care settings. These initiatives included meetings between junior infant teachers and early years educators, as well as orientation sessions for prospective infant pupils and their parents to visit and familiarise themselves with the new school environment. The school had also taken part in a transitions project run by the local education centre. One of the infant teachers had created a picture book to support new pupils in their transition to the school. The *Mo Scéal* templates formed part of the information flow from the early learning and care settings to the school. There was also a system in place to inform senior pupils of their options when transitioning to post-primary school, including visits to the school by representatives from the local post-primary schools.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was excellent, and it was evident that distributed leadership structures promoted a shared vision of education throughout the school.
- The board of management was very well informed on achievements in teaching and learning and on all school developments, and discharged its leadership and management responsibilities very effectively. Board members worked collaboratively, and in a supportive manner, to ensure that the school was a safe and effective learning environment. It ensured that a broad range of teaching and learning resources, such as levelled reading material, a well-stocked and organised school library, digital devices and PE equipment were available. The board provided an agreed report to parents following their meetings via the school newsletter. To build on this excellent practice, an annual report on the work of the board should now be provided to parents.
- The principal demonstrated excellent organisational and management skills. He fostered highly effective relations with pupils and parents and a strong culture of shared responsibility and collaboration among the staff. He managed change and challenge very effectively, and high-quality communication and trust were central to his approach. Commendably, he provided opportunities to all teachers to develop their leadership capacity across a variety of areas of the school. All parents who responded to the survey agreed that there was a good atmosphere in the school and that the school was well run.
- The in-school management team each had a set of duties which they carried out diligently. They supported the principal very effectively and provided leadership and coordination support to the teachers in their roles. Each member of the team provided an annual report to the principal on work completed as part of these duties. Procedures to support the mentoring and induction of teachers were well established. The school reported that it regularly provided placements for student teachers from Initial Teacher Education programs.
- There was an active parents' association (PA) in the school, which operated to an annual calendar of school events. Its structures ensured representation from each class in the school. The nominees of the PA reported very good communication with the school and principal and were very complimentary of the quality of education and support for pupils provided in the school. The PA's fundraising had supported the school in providing additional resources for the school. There was evidence that the school could involve the parents more meaningfully in school policy development.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) was very good. There was evidence that previous cycles of SSE had a positive impact on teaching and learning in the school. The school used effective approaches to identify priorities for school improvement, such as analysis of assessment data in Mathematics and use of the indicators of success in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*. The school had developed a school improvement plan (SIP) for each cycle of SSE with actions and targets to guide the process. Overall, the school demonstrated very good capacity for self-improvement.

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 welcomes the content of this report, which acknowledges and affirms the excellent work of our school. It is pleased that the school has met all of the child protection and anti-bullying procedure requirements set out by the Department of Education. The Board appreciates that it has recognised so clearly so many positive aspects of our school; its use of the outdoor environment, progress and development, its achievements and the commitment of its staff. The Board is pleased that the report recognises the high standards of teaching and learning and fostering a respectful, welcoming and positive school. We are also appreciative of the recognition of the excellent quality of leadership and management and the very successful engagement in the school self-evaluation process. The Board wishes to acknowledge the excellent work, commitment and dedication of the staff of our wonderful school.

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 staff and Board of Management of St Colmcille's NS welcome and accept the recommendations contained in this report. We will continue to build on the strengths identified and endeavour to incorporate best practice to further improve the teaching and learning within our school. In regards to the development of an agreed whole-school approach to further develop pupils' oral language skills, we will incorporate this into our existing school improvement plan for Writing Genres over a two-year cycle. We will endeavour to ensure pupils are facilitated to speak and converse early and often in Irish. As a school, we remain wholly committed to maintaining and improving our very high standards of teaching and learning, in all curricular areas.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective