An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Effin Kilmallock Co. Limerick
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	17299B
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	05-05-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	04/09/2023

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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
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	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 responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.

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.	

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

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Date of inspection	03-05-2023 – 05-05-2023
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 • Pupil focus group	• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher 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 Mhuire is a rural, co-educational primary school located in Effin, Co. Limerick. The school operates under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick. Staffing consists of a teaching principal and three other mainstream teachers. The school has two special education teachers, one of whom is shared with another school. At the time of the evaluation, 89 pupils were enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of learning was very good overall; pupils presented as highly motivated, enthusiastic learners eager to participate in their learning activities.
- Teaching was of a high quality with some excellent practice observed.
- The quality of assessment was good overall; pupils' progress was carefully monitored and teachers set high but realistic expectations for pupils' attainment.
- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was exemplary; pupils' holistic development was impressively provided for, and staff were deeply aware of and responsive to pupils' needs.
- The quality of school leadership was of a high standard; school leaders have established and maintained a highly collaborative and inclusive school culture.
- The quality of school self-evaluation was good; whole-school improvement initiatives were prioritised in classrooms and have meaningfully impacted learner experiences.

Recommendations

- Teachers should embed formative assessment approaches including self and peer assessment strategies, to ensure pupils' gain an increased sense of ownership over their learning.
- The special education team should develop planning practices to further inform the targeting of in-class support interventions including team teaching.
- The in-school leadership team should ensure their duties are formally recorded and that opportunities exist for the team's achievements to be shared with the BOM.
- The school should use the six-step self-evaluation process to ensure school improvement can be progressed in a consultative and focused manner, the impact of which can be appropriately monitored.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good overall. Pupils demonstrated the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required by the curriculum. Pupils thoughtfully applied and transferred this knowledge and these skills during their learning activities. During classroom interactions, pupils enjoyed opportunities to talk about their learning and share their experiences. In lessons, pupils participated productively in classroom discussions and displayed the ability to respectfully welcome and challenge each other's ideas. Pupils had a strong understanding of teachers' expectations and responded well to these expectations. They confidently requested assistance from their teachers when required. Across the school, play-based approaches and games ensured fun and productive learning experiences were provided for pupils. Almost all pupils who participated in a survey, as part of the evaluation, felt that the school helped them to do well at their subjects most or all of the time.
- Pupils demonstrated positive attitudes towards their learning in Mathematics and could capably relate this learning to their everyday lives. During lessons observed pupils engaged in a range of mathematical activities including, estimation, problem-solving, calculation and reasoning. Pupils had a strong sense of number and recognised relationships and trends that existed between the mathematical concepts they were learning about. Increased opportunities should be provided for pupils to reflect on and write about their learning in numeracy.
- Across the school, a positive reading culture was promoted. Pupils have had opportunities to engage with a wide variety of texts and genres. Libraries were very well stocked and presented and pupils spoke at length on their reading preferences and favourite authors. Teachers recognised the importance of cross-disciplinary literacy and skilfully integrated speaking, reading and writing into subject areas across the curriculum. In some classes pupils have explored and memorised a wide repertoire of poetry.
- Ar an iomlán bhí dearcadh dearfach ag na daltaí dá bhfoghlaim i nGaeilge. Bhí leibhéal maith tuisceana agus stór focal cuí ag go leor daltaí. Rinneadh forbairt mhaith ar a scileanna luathchumarsáide agus bhí siad in ann abairtí simplí a chur le chéile. B'fhiú deiseanna níos leithne a sholáthar do na daltaí, trasna na scoile, an teanga a úsáid i slí fhíor-chumarsáideach. *Overall pupils had a positive attitude towards their learning in Irish. Many pupils had a good level of understanding and an appropriate vocabulary. Their early communication skills were well developed and they were able to construct simple sentences. It is recommended that a wider range of opportunities be provided for the pupils, across the school, to use the language in communicative contexts.*
- Pupils have been involved in rich exploration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). They have engaged in critical-thinking, experimentation, coding and problem-solving in response to real life tasks posed. Focus group pupils described the unique benefit they derived from a recent visit by guest speakers to the school on the topic of STEM. Pupils also admirably described their deep appreciation for the immediate school grounds and capably outlined how using the outdoor classroom impacts their learning.
- Pupils' achievements in Arts Education are of a high standard. Pupils proudly engaged in musical performance and younger pupils sang complex songs with melody and rhythm.

2. The quality of teaching

- Teaching was of a high quality with some excellent practice observed. Teachers created attractive, engaging classroom environments to stimulate and support pupils' learning. They taught well-structured, child-centred lessons in which clear learning intentions were shared with pupils. A variety of teaching approaches was utilised to captivate and maintain pupils' attention. Teachers planned and provided learning activities which responded to pupils' interests and learning needs. Highly effective use of digital technology was a feature

of practice across the school. Innovative use of video technology inspired pupils to become deeply invested in the focus of their learning. In lessons observed teachers used an appropriate balance of independent, pair and group tasks to enable pupils develop skills of social engagement and teamwork. In some lessons, pupils enjoyed opportunities to make meaningful choices during their learning activities, enhancing their sense of agency over their learning. During interventions observed, including in-class support and station teaching, teachers generally used questioning effectively to consolidate pupils' learning and build their curiosity. The team of special education teachers have prepared, in a consultative manner, highly specific support plans for pupils which ensure that there is a strong commitment to maintaining high standards and monitoring learning for pupils in receipt of additional support. Scope now exists to develop planning practices to further inform the targeting of in-class support interventions including team teaching.

- Teachers closely monitored pupils' progress and a variety of assessments were used to understand pupils' attainment across a range of areas. Diagnostic assessments and standardised results were analysed to inform interventions. The use of pre and post assessments to monitor pupils' progress in Literacy Lift Off was praised. Formative assessment approaches should now be further embedded, including use of self and peer-assessment, to ensure pupils' gain an increased sense of ownership over their learning.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was very good. Across the school a safe and nurturing environment has been established in which pupils' individuality and creativity was welcomed and affirmed. Positive, open-relationships built on mutual trust were a strong feature of school life in Scoil Mhuire. Pupils were treated respectfully, with patience and understanding during lessons observed. Pupil voice was encouraged and facilitated in a variety of ways, including during lessons and through pupils' roles on committees. A range of initiatives was in place to promote and enrich pupils' emotional resilience and sense of wellbeing. These included Friendship Week and the provision of social and emotional regulation programmes in classrooms and support settings. A very active parents association provides valuable support to the school and ensures that a strong sense of community permeates all aspects of school life. Parent surveys indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school. Parents were particularly positive about the extent to which the school helps their child progress with Mathematics and Reading.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was of a high standard. The board of management (BOM) was properly constituted, met regularly and was well informed on all aspects of school life. The BOM should now share their accomplishments with the school community annually. The principal provided highly effective leadership. This was underpinned by her high standards and commitment to maintaining a positive, supportive and inclusive school culture. The principal was well supported by an in-school leadership team which conscientiously tended to a broad range of duties. There is a need to ensure these duties are recorded and that opportunities exist for the team's achievements to be formally shared with the BOM during the school year.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation was good overall. A range of curricular and organisational policies had been developed to inform curricular provision and the smooth running of the school. The school had engaged in identifying areas for school improvement and these had been actively prioritised in all classrooms. A purposeful range of meaningful initiatives had been introduced to support the enhancement of pupils' wellbeing and their executive functioning. These were observed to positively impact on pupils' daily learning experiences. During the focus group with pupils, they reported the immense value they derived from their meaningful engagement with Friendship Week and the impact this had on their personal development. The school should now ensure that the six-step self-

evaluation process is used to ensure that school improvement is progressed in a consultative and focused manner and that its impact can be prudently monitored.

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;