An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	Scoil Naomh Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Mountbellew Ballinasloe Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18125T

Date of Evaluation: 23-11-2016

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION?

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school. In addition to evaluating management and leadership in the school, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and one other subject.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of leadership and management
2. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. Quality of support for pupils

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.

Whole-School Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	23-11-2016
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with principal and deputy principal • Meeting with the board of management • Meeting with parent representatives • Review of relevant documents	• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to senior management team and teachers • Feedback to board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Naomh Mhuire is a co-educational primary school serving the town of Mountbellew, Co. Galway. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. Currently there are six mainstream teachers and two support teachers based in the school. Two support teachers based in other schools provide additional support to some pupils.

At the time of the evaluation there were 151 pupils on roll. Overall, the attendance levels are good. This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and History.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Recent building developments reflect the work of a highly committed board of management and close co-operation with parents and the local community.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the school is good with some exemplary practice observed in some settings.
- Teachers' willingness to explore innovative approaches and to work collaboratively is highly commendable.
- The writing genres have been taught systematically. There is a need for a more systematic approach to the development of oral language skills across the school.
- Tá athbhreithniú déanta ar an bpolasaí Gaeilge, ach tá gnéithe den pholasaí le cur i bhfeidhm fós. *The policy for Irish has been recently reviewed, but aspects of the policy have yet to be implemented.*
- While the provision for pupils with special education needs and additional learning needs is of a good quality, there is now a need to review the policy for support provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach to oral language development in English should be implemented.
- Moltar scileanna cumarsáide, léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ó rang go rang, bunaithe ar an bpolasaí sa Ghaeilge. *It is recommended that pupils' communication, reading and writing skills are systematically developed from class to class through the implementation of the Irish policy.*
- The school should plan strategically on an annual basis for the more effective deployment of the additional resources it receives to support pupils with specific learning needs.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The board of management is constituted properly and, under the guidance of its competent chairperson, provides very good leadership to the school. It meets regularly and considers a broad range of issues at its meetings. The board uses available finances productively. These financial decisions have led to obvious improvements in the school environment. The management of the refurbishment and development of the school building in recent years is highly commendable. While financial reports are presented at board meetings, it is recommended that school accounts be certified annually in accordance with section 18.1 of the Education Act 1998.

- The principal demonstrates effective leadership qualities and makes a positive contribution to leading initiatives in the school. He has a clear vision for the school, and is committed to the holistic development of the pupils and to fostering strong relations with staff and parents. He is ably supported by his in-school management team. In line with best practice, it is recommended that team members report on their work to the staff and to the board of management. The staff is commended for establishing committees to actively progress particular tasks and projects in relation to teaching and learning.

- The school's resources are managed very well. The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. A wide range of the pupils' work is on display, with some notably high quality exhibits in evidence during the evaluation. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used very effectively to enhance the teaching of lessons. Ancillary staff members provide valuable support to the school.

- A range of communication systems is in operation to inform parents and the community about school life. It is suggested that the frequency of newsletters be increased in order to further improve communication. The board should issue an annual report to parents. The parents' association provides valuable support and assistance to the school through the organisation of whole-school community events and through hosting parental information talks.

- Overall, the management of pupils is good. During the evaluation, pupils were courteous and enthusiastic in their learning. As reflected in their responses to the Inspectorate questionnaires, it is timely to consider enabling the pupils' participation in relevant decision-making, through the re-establishment of a pupil council.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The overall quality of school planning is good. A comprehensive range of administrative policies provides appropriate direction to all staff. Some of the curricular policies require further development to ensure progression and continuity for pupils.

- Good classroom planning underpins the work of the teachers. Commendably, an agreed whole-school approach to short-term planning has been devised. To optimise this work, short-term planning should now detail clearer opportunities for linkage and integration and the development of subject specific vocabulary.

- A collaborative and evidence based approach to school self-evaluation (SSE) is having a positive and successful impact on teaching and learning throughout the school. This information should now be shared with the school community.

3. QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good with some exemplary teaching practices observed. The teachers are very committed to their work. Lessons observed were well structured and paced with a high level of pupil engagement. Teachers' willingness to explore innovative approaches and to work collaboratively is highly commendable. Further pair work and group work should be incorporated into lessons.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Ta dearcadh dearfach ag na daltaí maidir le foghlaim na teanga. Baineadh úsáid éifeachtach as módhanna múinte éagsúla. Sa chleachtas ab fhearr a bhreathnaíodh, bhí raon mhaith de nathanna cainte, abairtí, rannta agus amhráin de ghlanmheabhair ag na daltaí. Moltar an dea-chleachtas sin a leathnú go córasach tríd an scoil. Múintear an scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus chruthaitheach bunaithe ar an ábhar sna téicsleabhar. B'fhiú tuilleadh béime a chur ar scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach a fhorbairt. Moltar scileanna cumarsáide, léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ó rang go rang bunaithe ar an bpolasaí sa Ghaeilge.
  The overall quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. The pupils have a positive disposition towards learning the language. Effective use was made of a variety of teaching approaches. In the best practice observed, pupils had learned a range of phrases, sentences, rhymes and songs from memory. This good practice should be extended systematically throughout the school. Functional and creative writing are taught based on the material in textbooks. Greater emphasis should be placed on the development of creative writing. It is recommended that pupils' communication, reading and writing skills be systematically developed from class to class through the implementation of the Irish policy.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. The staff is commended for the implementation of whole school initiatives. The introduction of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework,* a structured phonics programme and *Literacy Lift Off* all help to facilitate effective early intervention and literacy lessons of a good quality. In line with the school improvement plan (SIP), pupils are enabled to write in a variety of genres. However, insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of comprehension strategies. In some classes, pupils recite poetry from memory. It is recommended that oral language be prioritised in English, to ensure the development of effective listening and oral presentation skills. This programme should place emphasis on the enrichment of vocabulary and should be taught through a variety of methodologies such as drama, circle time, pair and group work. Consideration should be given to extending the practice of guided reading sessions in senior classes using differentiated reading material.

- Teaching and learning in Mathematics are effective. There is explicit teaching of concepts and appropriate mathematical language. Most pupils demonstrate rapid recall of number facts and proficiency in number operations. In some settings, highly effective use is made of concrete materials, activity-based learning and collaborative learning methodologies. This

should be extended to all settings. The school is commended for implementing a whole-school focus on problem solving. Priority should now be given to early intervention in Mathematics.

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is commendable. Exemplary practice was observed whereby pupils were enabled to develop their skills as historians through valuable engagement with primary sources of evidence. An appropriate focus should be placed on local history in all classes together with the development of pupils' knowledge and appreciation of the history of their community, locality and heritage, as identified in the History policy.

- Standardised testing is used appropriately to monitor pupils' progress. In order to derive maximum benefit from the data yielded by these assessments, individual pupil attainments in literacy and numeracy should be benchmarked against performance in a non-reading intelligence test. All teachers maintain pupil profiles and use an appropriate range of assessment strategies including self-assessment to track pupils' learning. Existing best classroom assessment practices in use in the school should be identified and extended throughout the school. This includes the provision of formative feedback on pupils' written work and the analysis of assessment information to identify the next steps in the pupils' learning.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs and additional learning needs is good. Lessons observed were characterised by mutually respectful and affirming teacher-pupil relationships. Good work in the development of skills was evident. While all teachers engage effectively in planning, a whole-school approach to planning for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) should be adopted. All teachers are advised to use the *Continuum of Support* documents provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and in particular the classroom support stage.

- To further improve the whole-school provision for special education, the school should plan strategically on an annual basis for the more effective deployment of the additional resources it receives in order to better support pupils with special learning needs. As far as it is practicable, pupils should receive support teaching from one teacher only. Support teachers have commenced in-class models of support. This practice is highly praiseworthy.

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. A significant emphasis is placed on pupils' holistic development. Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in a wide variety of sports, competitions, projects and initiatives, including the Green Schools Programme, *Discovery Primary Science Programme* and Junior School Wardens. This is an inclusive school where all pupils are enabled to fully participate in the life of the school.

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 of St. Mary's N.S. welcomes this very positive Whole School Evaluation Report. We are pleased with the acknowledgement of the high standards affirmed by the Inspectorate regarding the quality of school planning, leadership, teaching and school self-evaluation. We are also very pleased with the results of the questionnaires which show our school to be a happy place to work for pupils and staff. The Board wishes to congratulate the staff and pupils on their high standard of achievement in all areas of education.

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 Board of Management acknowledges and accepts the findings and recommendations of the WSE report and the school has already begun to address the recommendations outlined in the report.

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 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;

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