An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Aodh Rua agus Nuala
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Upper Main Street Donegal Town
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19963S
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	28/01/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	03/03/2026

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>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the child safeguarding statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.
2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.
4. The school's child safeguarding statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025.
5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a pupil-friendly version that is displayed where pupils and the school community can see it.
2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and pupils.
3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta.
4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.
5. All staff visited report that they have read the school's Bí Cineálta policy and that they are aware of their roles and</td></tr>
</table>

protection oversight report in line with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 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 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 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	responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

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

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	20/01/2026– 22/01/2026
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, 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 Aodh Rua agus Nuala is a co-educational primary school catering for pupils from infants to sixth class. The current enrolment is 214 pupils. The school has three special classes for autistic pupils. The school operates under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. The teaching staff comprises an administrative principal, ten mainstream class teachers, three special class teachers, three teaching posts for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), two of whom are shared with other schools and one part-time teacher for pupils with needs in English as an additional language (EAL). The school participated in the Say Yes to Languages Programme. The work of a representative sample of teachers was observed during the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good; pupils presented as confident and engaged learners with well-established learning routines.
- The quality of teaching was of a very high standard; teachers had a very good focus on higher-order thinking skills by allowing pupils to engage in activities that involved enjoyment, effort, risk-taking, critical thinking and reflection.
- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent; teachers created and sustained a very co-operative and productive learning environment for pupils.
- The quality of leadership and management was excellent overall; those in leadership roles led the school community to strive continuously for excellence by setting high standards for pupils.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) was of a very high standard; the approaches adopted by teachers had impacted significantly on improving experiences and outcomes for pupils in literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Recommendations

- Teachers should use the monthly reports to record the progression in pupils' learning and to inform continuity and progression.

- To enhance teachers' assessment approaches, teachers should make further use of the progression continuum and diagnostic assessment data to inform specific target setting and the selection of differentiated teaching approaches.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good. The pupils presented as confident and engaged learners with well-established learning routines. Their enjoyment of their learning experiences was underpinned by a clear sense of making progress and personal achievement. Pupils participated actively in classroom discussions across a range of curricular areas and topics of interest. Pupils had achieved exceptionally high standards of attainment in English, Irish and Mathematics in standardised tests.
- In literacy, pupils demonstrated progression in their vocabulary and their use of language functions. Bhí na daltaí in ann abairtí a chruthú go neamhspleách i nGaeilge, agus d'úsáid siad an teanga go héifeachtach le linn na tréimhse cumarsáide ina gcuid foghlama. *Pupils were able to construct sentences in Irish independently and they used Irish well during the communicative phase in their learning.* Pupils had very well-developed reading skills and they read with a very high level of fluency and understanding. They were able to discuss and share key facts from novels they had read. Pupils' analytical and thinking skills were very well extended, particularly when they engaged with texts actively across different areas of the curriculum. Pupils' disciplinary literacy skills were very well developed across the curriculum. They were able to apply their learning and new skills to other curricular areas competently. Pupils could make connections in their learning across subjects of the curriculum including, History and Drama.
- In Mathematics, pupils' mathematical proficiency in numeracy was at a very high level. There was a whole-school emphasis on the use of the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* (PMC) *Maths talk* approach in all lessons. Pupils were able to use a variety of mathematical procedures effectively and efficiently. They were able to represent and solve mathematical problems skilfully. Pupils engaged very well in structured activities involving computation and directional language for the development of early programming skills.
- Pupils completed projects to a very high standard using digital technologies. They demonstrated choice, independence and collaborative learning skills through their engagement in these projects. They also demonstrated very good research and presentation skills.
- In the focus group, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity to engage with STEM and learn Irish during their physical education lessons, as part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach to language learning. The pupils demonstrated a strong understanding of the new mathematics curriculum and the opportunities it has created for them to enhance their experiences in Mathematics.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching was of a very high standard with some exemplary approaches observed. Teachers set very high expectations for learning and prepared lessons with suitably challenging learning experiences. The teachers created lessons and activities, which promoted engaging, playful and creative learning very effectively and supported the development of pupils' independence and collaborative skills.

- Teachers prepared very well for teaching. Teachers placed a very good focus on higher-order thinking skills by enabling pupils engage in enjoyable activities that encouraged risk-taking, critical thinking and reflection. To enhance current provision, teachers should share the success criteria for all lessons with pupils. This should include skills development and differentiated learning to help pupils identify their progress and understand the next steps in their learning. Teachers should use the monthly reports to to support the pupils' learning progression.
- A very positive learning environment was created that supported the learning process, celebrated pupils' work, and was responsive to the pupils' needs and strengths. Displays were print-rich, colourful, stimulating and reflected the breadth of the curriculum and pupils' interests.
- Teachers provided inclusive, affirming learning environments and demonstrated high quality classroom management skills. Teachers had well established structures in place to support pupils with additional needs in a systematic and inclusive way.
- In the exceptional examples observed, disciplinary literacy was evident and the pupils' imagination was developed very creatively. Teachers integrated literacy and numeracy skills effectively into lessons.
- In teachers' surveys, all teachers agreed that there were good pupil support systems in place in the school. All parents surveyed agreed that teaching was good in the school and that their child was doing well.
- The quality of assessment was effective overall. Teachers used a range of questioning techniques to stimulate responses, to facilitate deep engagement with lesson content and extend their learning. Teachers used a range of assessments including standardised assessments, diagnostic tests and class-based assessments. It would be beneficial to use autism-specific diagnostic tests and checklists to track pupils' progression and inform future learning for pupils with additional needs. Teachers monitored pupils' learning on a regular basis and provided constructive feedback and observations during lessons and in copy books which helped pupils improve their learning. To build on teachers' assessment approaches, teachers should make further use of the progression continuum and diagnostic assessment data to inform specific target setting and the selection of differentiated teaching approaches. The learning targets in support files were reviewed and updated by teachers. These targets should be more specific and measurable and adapted in accordance with the pupils' ongoing and evolving needs.
- Teachers' collective and collaborative practices were highly effective overall. Teachers worked together to prepare for the different class levels and to discuss the pedagogical approaches the *Primary Language Curriculum* (2025) and the PMC. Teachers recognised that professional learning and collaboration were essential aspects of their work. They engaged in many professional learning opportunities including courses provided by the National Council for Special Education and shared this learning at whole-school level. They used formal meeting times to reflect on their work. They responded positively to change and were proactive in building collective expertise and approaches necessary to facilitate all pupils in their learning.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The overall quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was exemplary. Very effective systems were in place so that pupil and parent perspectives were listened to and included in the school's policy development. This included the establishment of a pupil council and a parents' association, which provided excellent support to the work of the school.

- Teachers created and maintained a highly co-operative and productive learning environment for pupils. The morning meet and greet led by all staff fostered a warm welcoming and positive school atmosphere.
- Almost all parents agreed that their children felt safe and well looked after in the school and that their child was treated fairly and respectfully in the school.
- Almost all pupils agreed that that they got on well with other pupils in their class, that they felt safe and well cared for in the school and their teacher listened to them.
- School leaders fostered a commitment to the holistic development of each pupil and had established a successful learning environment through effective communication. All staff were welcoming and supported the celebration of diversity in the school, including pupils' home languages.
- The school had established and maintained very effective links with relevant agencies and feeder schools, which facilitated transition to and from the school.
- During the focus group discussion, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their shared learning experiences with a local primary school in the Léargas PeacePlus initiative. They also described their successful participation in local literary and national art and quiz competitions and national quizzes. Pupils appreciated the opportunities to participate in the pupil council, the Green Schools' Programme, the Nature Hero Award and the Active Flag initiative.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was excellent overall.
- In a meeting with representatives of the board, it was evident that the board functioned very effectively and that members demonstrated a strong commitment towards supporting the staff, pupils and the development of the school.
- The principal, deputy principal and other leaders fostered a culture in which reflection, collaboration, learning and creativity flourished. They led the school community to strive continuously for excellence by setting high standards for all pupils. Very good relationships had been established between leadership and the teaching staff.
- The principal was very successful in working with teachers to cultivate a pupil-centred culture in the school. The principal demonstrated an excellent understanding of the strengths of educational provision within the school and the priority areas for development. She empowered teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning through the effective use of distributed leadership approaches. The principal demonstrated excellent organisational skills and systematically involved teachers, staff, pupils, and parents in decision-making and school improvement.
- The principal was very ably supported by the diligent work of the deputy principal. All teachers surveyed agreed that the core values of the school were implemented daily. All parents and teachers agreed that the school was well run.
- The in-school management team exercised their role in leading and managing action planning for improvement very competently. They devised action plans for improvement on a whole-school basis based on the schools' priorities in the areas of wellbeing, digital learning and the development of the PLC. It would be beneficial for the in-school management team to establish a systematic approach to monitoring progression in their areas of responsibility.
- The school provided placements for teachers regularly in their initial teacher education programmes, which aligned with the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) was of a very high standard. The approaches adopted by teachers had impacted significantly on improving experiences and outcomes for pupils in literacy, numeracy, STEM and wellbeing.
- All teachers had engaged with the SSE processes in a collaborative manner. Teachers used the four key areas in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* to implement worthwhile actions for school improvement.
- To support the further development of SSE, the overall targets should be refined to help teachers monitor and record successes in the actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment.
- Almost all teachers in questionnaires agreed that SSE was used to improve pupils' learning. It was evident that the SSE process had impacted very positively on school life.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board or Management of Scoil Aodh Rua agus Nuala warmly welcomes the findings of the Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning report and notes the highly positive affirmation of provision across the school.

The Board acknowledges and is delighted with the following:

- That all required safeguarding and anti-bullying checks were met and recognises the report's affirmation of the many strengths evident across teaching, learning and leadership in the school.
- The description of pupils as "confident and engaged learners with well- established learning routines," recognising this as a reflection of the high standard of teaching, planning and support provided by staff.
- The finding that "the quality of teaching was of a very high standard" and "the quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent," reflecting the school's strong commitment to the holistic development of all pupils.
- The recognition that "the quality of leadership and management was excellent Overall' and that the school's self-evaluation practices were "of a very high standard."
- The Board was encouraged by the very positive feedback from the school community:
    - All parents surveyed agreed that teaching was very good in the school and that their child was doing well.
    - Teachers affirmed that strong pupil-support systems are in place.
    - Pupils in the focus group spoke enthusiastically about their learning experiences and the wide range of opportunities available across the curriculum.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Following engagement with the recommendations in the report, the Board of Management and staff have agreed a focused set of actions to further strengthen practice and support continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

Use of monthly reports to support continuity and progression

- The school will continue to strengthen the use of monthly progress reporting to support continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
- Agreed templates will be reviewed to ensure evidence of progress

- This information will be used systematically to inform planning across class levels and to support collaborative discussion at planning and staff meetings.
- These measures will ensure that pupils' learning progression is monitored and supported.

Further development of assessment to inform target setting and differentiation

- Teachers will continue to develop assessment approaches through the systematic use of the progression continuum and diagnostic assessment information to inform specific target setting and the selection of differentiated teaching approaches.
- Staff will continue to engage in collaborative professional dialogue to agree shared understandings of effective target setting.

Ongoing Commitment of the Board

- The Board will remain firmly focused on supporting the school in providing the best possible learning environment for pupils and for the wider school community.
- Continued professional development for staff to enhance their skills will always be supported by the Board.
- In partnership with the principal and staff, the Board is committed to ongoing improvement, careful planning and the continued development of high-quality educational provision.
- This work will ensure that the needs of all current and future learners are supported in a positive, inclusive and well-resourced environment.