

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Michael's National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Danesfort Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	01300Q

Date of inspection: 13-02-2020



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 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.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

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 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, Well-being).
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	11-02-2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

St Michael's National School is a rural school located in the village of Danesfort, Co. Kilkenny and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. It has two mainstream class teachers and one special education teacher, shared with another school. Attendance rates of the forty six pupils enrolled are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Support for pupils' well-being is of a very high quality with a commendable emphasis on physical activity and mental well-being.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, communication of decisions to the wider school community needs to be reviewed.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; improvements in planning and assessment require attention.
- The quality of the pupils' learning overall is good; appropriate differentiation and behaviour management require development.
- Supports for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good; scope exists for a review of time allocation and assessment approaches.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) is satisfactory; further input is required to ensure the impact of SSE is evident in classroom practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should ensure that all special education teaching hours are allocated in accordance with Department of Education guidelines in Circular No 0013/2017.
- Teachers should ensure that agreed whole-school approaches for the provision of appropriately differentiated learning tasks and expected pupil behaviour are consistent features of all lessons.
- The school should review planning and assessment practices to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are covered effectively.
- An agreed report should be shared with the school community after each board meeting and mechanisms to involve parents in policy formation require development.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of pupils' learning is good overall. Most pupils achieve a good standard in English and Mathematics with some pupils achieving very good outcomes. Some pupils have access to differentiated-reading material and writing tasks, with regular monitoring of progress and learning outcomes. Appropriate differentiation and monitoring of components of reading and writing should be in place for all pupils. Differentiated outcomes and tasks are in place for all pupils in Mathematics. Good use is made of resources to enhance pupils' learning experiences. While all pupils engaged with tasks, some pupils experienced difficulties with sustained engagement. Where very good outcomes were evident, all pupils were provided with appropriately differentiated tasks which ensured sustained engagement and very good learning outcomes.
- Tá cumas na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge an mhaith. Is féidir leis na daltaí abairtí iomlána a úsáid agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt go muiníneach. Is féidir leo raon an-mhaith de dánta agus d'amhráin a chur i láthair go cumasach. Bíonn deiseanna ag na daltaí scríbhneoireacht a dhéanamh ach ba choir níos mó éagsúlacht a cur i bhfeidhm. *The pupils' ability in Irish is very good. Pupils are able to use complete sentences and are able to pose and answer questions confidently. They can perform a range of songs and poems competently. Pupils write regularly in Irish; more variety of writing tasks should be provided.*
- Pupil learning, observed during the evaluation, in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) Music, Visual Arts and Physical Education was praiseworthy. Skills development, guided discovery learning and pupil enjoyment received due attention in these lessons. Further development in short-term planning is required to ensure breadth, balance and consistency of pupil learning in subjects across the curriculum.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall, teaching observed ranged from very good to satisfactory. Where very good practice was observed, teachers prepared appropriately differentiated tasks, communicated very clear expectations to pupils about behaviour, and used a range of teaching methodologies to promote purposeful pupil engagement. The school should ensure that this highly-effective practice is implemented in all lessons.
- Teachers' planning and preparation are good overall. Teacher subject knowledge in all settings is commendable. Engagement with the *Primary Language Curriculum* (PLC) is evident in teachers' written plans. *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* has been implemented to a good standard in the school. Plans identify clear learning outcomes for most curriculum subjects. While short term plans are in place, development is required to ensure that all timetabled subject areas have appropriate learning outcomes in place for each fortnight to ensure breadth and balance across the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching observed in special education settings is good. Relationships and interactions support a co-operative and productive learning environment. An awareness of pupils' personal and learning needs is evident. While the *Continuum of Support* is being implemented, not all allocated time is being used to support pupils with the highest level of need. Timetables should now be devised in accordance with Department of Education guidelines in Circular No 0013/2017.

- The school uses some diagnostic tests to identify pupils' individual learning needs in aspects of literacy. The range of diagnostic testing should be expanded, particularly in Mathematics and reading comprehension, to inform learning targets to meet individual pupil need.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Teachers use a range of assessment tools. In some instances, very good use is made of this assessment information to identify learning needs and to plan for teaching and learning. A more consistent approach to the assessment of pupil learning across the curriculum is required.

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

- Support for pupils' well-being in the school is highly commendable. There is a caring, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. A positive, collegial atmosphere prevails and teachers have participated in professional development to support pupil well-being.
- A wide range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided and is impacting positively on pupils' well-being. While pupils can discuss and demonstrate enjoyment of events, further consideration should be given to increasing opportunities for pupil voice and pupil leadership.
- The school implements a cohesive, whole-school approach to the teaching of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Stay Safe, and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Most parents who completed questionnaires agreed that the school helps their child's social and personal development and that they were informed of the schools' Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. Communication of the school's RSE policy should be enhanced.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management is very supportive of staff professional development and is committed to providing a safe, well-run, orderly school. There is scope for more regular communication from the board. It is recommended that a report be issued regularly to the wider school community on the work of the school and the work of the board.
- The principal demonstrates very good leadership skills and a strong commitment to teaching and learning in the school. The principal is aware of the school's changing needs and has plans to address these needs.
- The in-school management (ISM) team demonstrates highly-effective collaboration in the day-to-day management of the school with a clearly identified set of duties. Consideration should be given to reviewing the existing duties to ensure management of the planning and implementation of the school curriculum. It is recommended that members of the ISM report on their work to the board of management.
- There is very good communication between the school and parents. Parents are kept informed of the work of the school through a range of media. Questionnaires from parents indicate that most parents feel welcome in the school, know who to talk to if there is a problem and that the school helps their child with personal and social development. The school has established a parents' association. They provide commendable support to the school to organise school and community events. While policies are available to parents, further development is required to involve parents in on-going policy development.
- The school reported that it provides placements for student teachers regularly. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the *Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*, as it can provide valuable benefits for teachers, pupils and the teacher education institute.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of SSE is satisfactory. The school has identified problem solving in Mathematics as an area for development. Data has been gathered from parents. Further development is required to devise a plan to meet the school's need. The school's capacity to develop and implement recommendations is very good.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board is delighted that the inspection report has affirmed the hard work of the school in providing very high quality support for pupils' well-being, as this is the cornerstone of our happy and productive learning environment. The Board also acknowledges the positive report on the leadership, teaching and learning in our school. Overall, the Whole School Evaluation process has been a valuable experience, giving us a good overview of the school and aids our prioritisation of work into the future.

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

In response to the recommendations made, the school has taken the following actions:

- The Special Education timetable has been updated and all hours are now allocated in accordance with circular 0013/2017.
- Curriculum policy reviews will have an increased focus on whole-school approaches for differentiation of learning tasks.
- Planning is now done on a fortnightly basis, rather than monthly, ensuring all areas of the curriculum are consistently covered.
- A report is now shared with the school community after every Board of Management meeting.
- Policy formation and reviews will involve input from the Parents' Association, when Covid 19 guidelines allow for meetings to be held again.

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 <i>very good</i> 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;