

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Cnoc an Mharcaigh
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Melview Longford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	07518E

Date of inspection: 11-03-2020



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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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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).
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	11-03-2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and the leadership and management team• Meeting with representative of the board of management• Meeting with parent representative• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 representatives

This evaluation was paused due to the school closures arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. While the majority of inspection activities took place in March 2020, the feedback meetings were not held until October 2020.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Cnoc An Mharcaigh is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. The school has an administrative principal, eleven mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers. At the time of the evaluation, there were 283 pupils enrolled and attendance levels were very good overall.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning is good overall with pupils displaying appropriate levels of content mastery across a range of subjects; their communication skills in Irish are underdeveloped.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; there is considerable variance in teachers' approaches to developing pupils' self-assessment skills in identifying strengths and areas for development as learners.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good overall.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good.
- The overall quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach should be agreed and implemented to develop pupils' communication skills in Irish incrementally and systematically.
- Teachers should adopt whole-school approaches to support pupils to reflect on their learning in a more consistent and developmental manner.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. Pupils demonstrate positive dispositions towards their learning. They display appropriate levels of content mastery across a range of subjects. Most pupils display commendable ability to apply their knowledge of relevant processes in Mathematics and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education to a variety of appropriate contexts, including real-life situations. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, most pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning and almost all parents agreed that their child is doing well in school.
- Pupils experiment in imaginative ways with a range of art materials to produce high quality creations in Visual Arts. They demonstrate keen awareness of the work of various artists.
- Pupils enjoy listening and responding to music and are enabled to make music individually and collaboratively. They engage with percussion instruments to demonstrate rhythm very effectively. There is a lack of incremental development in pupils' knowledge of musical literacy; a whole-school approach should be devised and implemented to support progression in this area of learning.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in thematic and integrated projects of work, including engineering-based and open-ended, design and make activities. In the majority of lessons observed, participation in learning was of a very high standard when pupils were provided with opportunities to collaborate and demonstrate their creativity.
- Whole-school emphasis on pupils' use of non-reusable workbooks should be reduced with a view to making increased provision for active and engaging learning experiences.
- Infant pupils have access to a broad range of structured and open-ended materials to support playful learning. Opportunities exist to enhance their language learning by facilitating purposeful engagement in socio-dramatic play.
- The majority of pupils are confident and articulate communicators in English with very good use of subject-specific vocabulary across a broad range of curricular areas.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá scileanna cumarsáide sásúil ag na daltaí. Tá siad in ann abairtí simplí a thuiscint agus a úsáid ach téann sé dian orthu comhrá a bheith acu go nádúrtha. Ba chóir cur chuige uile scoile a aontú agus a chur i bhfeidhm chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil agus go córasach. *In Irish, the pupils have satisfactory communication skills. They are able to understand and use simple sentences but they find it difficult to converse naturally. A whole-school approach should be agreed and implemented to develop pupils' communication skills incrementally and systematically.*

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have engaged in a range of continuous professional development courses to further their pedagogical knowledge for developing pupils' learning. Overall, they have very good classroom management skills. They create inclusive learning environments based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust.
- Teachers' collective practice in the successful implementation of whole-school approaches to writing genres and comprehensive strategies in English and to problem-solving in Mathematics is highly commendable.
- Overall, the majority of lessons observed were appropriately structured and paced with purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply and consolidate their learning. Where very good practice was observed, learning intentions and success criteria were shared with pupils and

there was an appropriate balance between teacher-led input and pupil participation. In a small number of lessons, insufficient opportunities were provided for pupils to engage in active and collaborative learning. Teachers should place greater emphasis on facilitating a more effective balance of teacher and pupil-led learning during lessons.

- Supports for pupils with special education needs are delivered in a variety of modes, including withdrawal, station-teaching and in-class interventions. Programmes of work provided are closely aligned to pupils' prioritised needs. In a few instances, teachers should reduce the number of learning targets outlined in pupil support plans to facilitate the monitoring of pupil attainment more effectively.
- Teachers use a range of assessments, including diagnostic testing, to inform the provision of differentiated learning activities and cater for pupils' varying abilities. Highly effective use of pupil self-assessment strategies, including innovative use of digital technologies, was noted in a few instances. Overall, there is considerable variance in teachers' approaches to developing pupils' self-assessment skills in identifying strengths and areas for development as learners. Teachers should adopt whole-school approaches to support pupils to reflect constructively on their learning in a more consistent and developmental manner.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. Teachers and leaders use a variety of strategies to establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment. These include valuable links with outside agencies and feeder schools, the implementation of well-being promotion programmes and provision of a breakfast club for pupils.
- Teachers make praiseworthy efforts to facilitate and develop pupils' leadership capacities. This is evident through pupils' participation in a variety of committees encompassing the promotion of physical activity, digital learning and environmental care. Building on the democratic culture that exists within the school, consideration should be given to the establishment of a pupil council to further promote pupil voice in relevant decision-making.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in a broad range of co-curricular activities. They are enabled to create and issue a newsletter to the school community on a regular basis, celebrating their achievements in various aspects of their learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. The board meets regularly and is well informed about overall educational standards. It plays an active role in policy formation and review, and the provision of resources to support teaching and learning.
- The principal has fostered a collaborative culture in the school community with high levels of commitment to inclusion and the promotion of well-being. The principal and the leadership and management team undertake a wide range of duties diligently; they lead teaching and learning initiatives very successfully. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents reported that the school is well run and all teachers agreed that the school's leadership and management system is effective.
- Procedures for the systematic review and development of whole-school curricular plans are well established. Many of these plans provide suitable guidance and support to inform teachers' classroom practice. In a minority of instances, aspects of whole-school curriculum plans are not fully contextualised to the school and its learners. Future reviews should place additional emphasis on the incremental development of learning content and skills.

- A wide range of channels exists to promote meaningful two-way communication between home and school. The board should support the formal re-establishment of the parents' association with a view to further enhancing parental involvement in policy development.
- The school provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome as it can provide valuable professional benefits for student teachers and the teacher education institution.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The overall quality of SSE is very good. A culture of collaboration and improvement has been nurtured through the school's purposeful engagement in the SSE process focusing on aspects of literacy, numeracy and digital learning. It is evident that the agreed actions in these areas are impacting positively on teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences. Leaders and teachers' collective ability to reflect on current provision and identify successes and areas for development is noteworthy.

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;