

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	S N Naomh Seosamh
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Arden View, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18797W

Date of inspection: 07-12-2017



WHAT IS 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 leadership and management, school planning and self-evaluation, and support for pupils, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and History.

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 leadership and management
2. The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. The 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 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

Date of inspection	08-12-2017
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal and deputy principal• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Review of relevant documents <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to senior management team and teachers,• Feedback to parent representatives• Feedback to board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Seosamh is a co-educational junior primary school located in Tullamore, County Offaly. The school, which is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath, participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), Band 2, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school has an enrolment of 414 pupils, a significant minority of whom have English as an additional language. A wide range of strategies is in place to support and promote good attendance among pupils. There is a whole-school strategic focus on reducing the number of pupils who are absent for more than twenty days. In addition to the twenty mainstream teachers and seven special education teachers, there are two teachers catering for the needs of pupils in two special classes. The school also has one class for pupils with specific speech and language disorders. The support of a home-school-community liaison-co-ordinator (HSCL) is shared with another school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The very high quality strategic leadership provided by the principal, the board of management, the deputy principal and the in-school management team fosters a culture of collaborative practice in which learning flourishes.
- The quality of teaching and learning In English, Mathematics and History is very good.
- Supports for pupils with additional learning needs and special educational needs are of a very high quality.
- Pupils' well-being and inclusion is integral to the work of the school, and pupils are managed in a very affirming and supportive manner.
- Teachers are enthusiastic reflective practitioners who are deeply committed to developing and embedding the schools' identified priorities.
- While teachers differentiate content and activities to cater for the varying needs of pupils, open-ended and challenging questions are not employed consistently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is scope to ensure that open-ended and challenging questions are used more consistently across the school so as to maximise pupils' opportunities to express their opinions and articulate their learning collaboratively, and thereby extend their learning beyond the lesson.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The work of the board of management is highly commended. Board members undertake their roles very effectively through engagement in strategic planning for school development, promoting the professional development of the staff, and the provision of good quality teaching and learning resources. Members are well informed regarding pupils' needs, their learning experiences and the educational standards pertaining in the school.
- The principal provides very high quality strategic leadership to the school community. She is deeply committed to the empowerment of staff, the pursuit of high standards in teaching and learning and the implementation of the school's motto, "Every child, every chance, every day". She successfully fosters beneficial relationships with the wider school community. The deputy principal and the in-school management team work collaboratively with the principal to lead improvements in teaching and learning, and in the organisation of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for pupils.
- Pupils are managed in a very affirming, respectful and supportive manner. During the evaluation, pupils were exemplary in their behaviour, attitudes and dispositions towards learning. Through the work of the student council and other committee work, pupils are empowered to actively participate in the life of the school.
- The management of resources is very good. The school has developed a number of additional resources including a sensory room and a well-used library to support and enhance pupils' learning experiences. Teachers have access to and capably use a wide range of high quality resources including information and communications technology (ICT). They have created very purposeful displays in all settings and circulation areas. Teachers are enthusiastic and reflective practitioners, and individuals take active roles in school development and the sharing of professional expertise. In their responses to questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, all teachers agreed that they are satisfied with the collaborative structures within the school and the manner in which the school is managed.
- Communication is managed very successfully. The school actively promotes the involvement of parents in its work. A very wide range of strategies is in place to inform parents about their children's education. In the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents agreed that they feel welcome in the school, that it is well run and that their child is doing well in school.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of whole-school administrative planning is very good. These plans facilitate the smooth running of the school.

- Whole-school curricular plans are of a good quality. These are useful to teachers, and are reflective of the school's context and identified priorities.
- The school reported that it is not currently engaging in the school-self-evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action. However, there is evidence that SSE work and DEIS action planning have impacted positively on school development. In advancing the current cycle of DEIS action planning to final completion, as a priority, the school should focus on documenting clear and measurable targets in all areas of the action plan.
- In their classroom planning, teachers identify clear learning objectives which are contextualised to pupils' learning needs.

3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commended. The teachers plan and deliver well-structured, purposeful and stimulating lessons. Teaching is characterised by the competent use of a wide range of teaching methodologies and the provision of effectively differentiated and suitably resourced learning activities. Pupils are eager and enthusiastic learners and they demonstrate persistence and focus in their independent and collaborative learning activities. There is scope to ensure that open-ended and challenging questions are used more consistently across the school so as to maximise pupils' opportunities to express their opinions and to articulate their learning collaboratively, and thereby extend their learning beyond the lesson. A whole-school approach to developing pupils' language competencies and to successfully embedding *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is evident, and this approach caters effectively for a range of learning styles in the infant classrooms.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama go maith sa Ghaeilge. I ngach rang, baintear úsáid as an gcur chuige cumarsáideach go héifeachtach. Múintear na strúctúir teanga agus an foclóir nua ar bhonn córasach céimniúil ó rang go rang. B'fhiú i ranganna áirithe tuilleadh deiseanna a chruthú do na daltaí athrá agus cleachtadh a dhéanamh ar an teanga nua seo ionas go sealbhóidh siad i gceart í. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga ar fud na scoile. Baintear feidhm an-éifeachtach as amhráin, rannta agus cluichí chun suim na ndaltaí a mhuscailt i rithim agus luas na teanga. Díríonn na hoidí aird mhaith ar chothú scileanna réamh-léitheoireachta agus réamh-scríbhneoireachta.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. In all classrooms, the communicative approach is used effectively. Language structures and new vocabulary are taught systematically from class to class. In particular classes, it would be worthwhile to create further opportunities for pupils to repeat and practise this new language so that they can internalise it accurately. A positive attitude to the language is fostered across the school. Very effective use is made of songs, rhymes and games to stimulate pupils' interest in the rhythm and pace of the language. Teachers place appropriate attention on developing pre-reading and pre-writing skills.

- In English, the quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers place worthwhile emphasis on ensuring that all pupils are reading at an appropriate level of challenge and that all aspects of phonics and grammar are differentiated to match the pupils' instructional needs. The majority of pupils read competently and with confidence. Teachers promote and foster very positive attitudes to reading. A whole-school approach to the development of pupils' oral language skills is evident through the implementation of the *Primary Languages Curriculum*

(2015). While pupils respond eagerly during their language activities, the selection of a wider range of language-learning activities is advised to further enable pupils to speak collaboratively for extended periods. Pupils' early and emergent writing skills are fostered systematically as they progress from class to class.

- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a very high quality. The school has succeeded in developing a positive attitude towards this subject. Pupils' oral mathematical abilities are extended by the teachers' skilful prompting and guiding. In-class interventions successfully facilitate pupils' active learning and support their differentiated needs in the development of mathematical concepts and skills. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' learning. Many pupils demonstrate steady and incremental progress in the application of specific computation strategies and the independent use of appropriate mathematical language.
- Provision for History is very good. Well-structured, lively and interesting lessons were observed during the evaluation. A very clear focus on the development of pupils' skills as historians enhanced the learning activities. Pupils' ability to discuss their learning using appropriate language and terminology is being developed systematically. However, a more consistent approach to the use of open-ended questions should be developed to extend pupils' learning within and beyond the learning activity. Pupils' purposeful engagement is successfully sustained through the provision of meaningful learning activities and the use of high quality resources and artefacts. The school's traditional Grandparents' day is a well-established part of pupils' learning experiences.
- The quality of the school's assessment practices is very good. A wide variety of screening, diagnostic and formative assessments is used to track pupils' progress, to identify their learning needs and to inform early intervention and programme planning across the school. Its analysis is used effectively to monitor the impact of teaching interventions and to set targets for cohorts of learners in literacy and numeracy. Self-assessment practices are well established, and most pupils can talk about their learning with confidence.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is highly commended. Supports are characterised by well-co-ordinated, collaborative and focused approaches in addressing pupils' clearly identified needs. An appropriate range of support models and programmes of in-class interventions in literacy and numeracy is in place. Focused and explicit teaching, and the provision of high-quality learning experiences underpin the work of the support-team. Teachers collaboratively prepare comprehensive student-support plans. In some contexts, a greater focus on consistently setting out measurable learning targets and on systematically reflecting the recommendations from professional reports is advised.
- Supports for pupils in the special classes and for pupils with specific speech and language needs are of a very high quality. Carefully-structured learning environments are prepared in these settings. Very good emphasis is placed on the holistic development of pupils' skills and in applying these skills in real-life scenarios.
- There is very good provision for pupils in the specific speech and language class. Language is carefully modelled and high quality pupil interactions foster the systematic development of pupils' expressive and receptive language skills.

- Though good quality weekly planning was noted in most support settings, there is scope to extend this approach across the team.
- The dedicated and committed approach of the HSCL co-ordinator, in collaboration with the support team, management, staff and outside agencies ensures that a comprehensive range of interventions, clubs, courses and programmes is in place for pupils and parents.
- Pastoral care and supports for pupils' well-being and inclusion is a hallmark the school's work. Many teachers have undertaken training to support pupils' inclusion and full participation in the life of the school.
- 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*.

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 <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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management, parent representatives, teaching staff and auxiliary staff of St Joseph's N.S. welcome and are very pleased with the WSE report from the DES. The whole process was a very worthwhile exercise in that we had a focussed opportunity to examine and analyse all aspects of our school life and to avail of independent assessment of our work. We, as a school community, looked at our academic and cultural practices with a view to ensuring the continued support for the children in our care. Home, school and community have always worked closely together in St Joseph's and we were glad to see this collaboration reflected in the report.

Teaching and learning in an inclusive and supportive environment for children and adults alike has been recognised and affirmed and will encourage the school community to further develop and embed the school's identified priorities encapsulated in our motto *'Every child , every chance, every day'*

Area 2 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 the recommendation to optimise the use of open-ended and challenging questions to extend the children's learning beyond the lesson.