



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Oilibhéir
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballyvolane Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19730S
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	10-11-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	17/01/2024

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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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 (revised 2023).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 (revised 2023).	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.5. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's policy on anti-bullying

<p>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, (revised 2023).</p> <p>7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</p> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</p>	<p>and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.</p>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Date of inspection	10-11-2023
Inspection activities undertaken	<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 of management representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with the special education team• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus group	

School context

Scoil Oilibhéir is a co-educational primary school located in Ballyvolane, Cork city. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. At the time of the evaluation, the school had 485 pupils, a staffing of one administrative principal, one administrative deputy principal and twenty-six mainstream teachers. There were two special class teachers for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), fourteen special education teachers (SETs), and a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator. The school was participating in Band 1 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes was very good and most were achieving in line with their abilities.
- The overall quality of teaching in mainstream, support settings and in special classes was very good; there were high levels of meaningful collaboration among teachers.
- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was very good; the collective focus on the nurture and care of pupils was a significant feature of provision in the school.
- The quality of leadership and management was very good and the principal expected and encouraged teachers to develop and extend their learning, teaching and assessment practice.
- The quality of school self-evaluation was very good and high expectations for pupil achievement were prioritised.

Recommendations

- While the quality of provision in support settings was very good, SETs should ensure that targets in Student Support Plans are consistently specific and quantifiable.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes was very good. Well-structured early intervention initiatives operated successfully. Careful attention was directed to progression of pupils' phonological awareness, fluency and comprehension. Skills in reading were developed consistently as pupils progressed through the school and many applied an enquiring disposition when responding to literacy tasks. Pupils had frequent opportunities to write in a range of genres, using imagination and extended language skills. Pupils in the middle and senior classes were observed to add greater detail in their oral contributions.

Tríd is tríd, bhí dearcadh dearfach ag na daltaí i leith na Gaeilge. Bhí béim ar úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil agus ar an nGaeilge sa timpeallacht ar fud na scoile. B'fhiú leanúint ar aghaidh ag cur deiseanna ar fáil do gach dalta an teanga a úsáid ar bhealach cumarsáideach chun labhairt faoi thopaicí a bhaineann lena saol laethúil. *Overall, the pupils displayed a positive attitude towards Irish. There was an emphasis on the informal use of Irish and on Irish in the environment throughout the school. It would be worthwhile to continue to provide opportunities for all pupils to use the language in a communicative way and to speak about topics linked to their everyday lives.*

Attainment in Mathematics was at a good standard overall. Most pupils were achieving in line with their abilities and where achievement was less than expected, appropriate measures were put in place to support learning. Pupils benefitted from a school-wide emphasis on the use of concrete materials and from classroom cultures where errors and mistakes were viewed as valuable learning opportunities. Many pupils could apply their knowledge and mathematical processes to real-life situations and pupils who demonstrated very good capacity were suitably challenged through differentiated and extended tasks.

In senior classes, pupils used individual learning logs to record and present their learning in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. As pupils took great pride in sharing their learning in these logs, consideration should be given to extending their use to all middle and senior classes. Very good quality lessons were also observed in Music where pupils' understanding of rhythm was extended and in lessons in Science and Physical Education where curricular skills were appropriately advanced.

Pupils enjoyed a broad range of playful and engaging learning experiences and the school's special needs assistants contributed positively to supporting their learning. Classroom activities were framed by pupils' interests, experiences and cultures. Pupils had frequent opportunities to work creatively and high-quality samples of their work in Visual Arts and projects featured prominently in displays. Pupils used the outdoor environment for Maths trails, nature walks and visits to local amenities. The school had established useful links with third level institutions, where pupil learning in technology and athletics was advanced. The school had a long tradition in Music and the band and choir provided an enriching musical experience.

Pupils in the focus group spoke very positively about their experiences as learners. They welcomed the opportunity provided to the students' council to represent their views. They spoke highly about the range of activities that were available to them including coding and a variety of sports, and they shared their experiences of learning outside the classroom.

2. The quality of teaching

Overall, the quality of teaching was very good. Teachers had high expectations for learning and behaviour and communicated these expectations effectively to pupils. Their preparation was informed by their knowledge of the curriculum and their professional judgement. They collectively engaged with a variety of professional learning opportunities. These involved critical reflection on practice to meet the diverse needs of pupils. This shared focus enabled

the teaching team to identify and comprehensively address the broad spectrum of pupil needs. Teachers who were new to the school were very well supported in following policy and practice in Scoil Oilibhéir.

The quality of teaching observed among experienced SETs was very high. SETs collaborated very effectively under the leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator. Where in-class support was provided, it included the successful implementation of initiatives such as Literacy Lift Off and Mata sa Rang. Reading Recovery and Maths Recovery were also implemented with notable success. The team met frequently to plan short-term interventions and to assess the success of initiatives. It operated a structured approach to the review of Student Support Plans. It is recommended that targets set in these plans be more specific and more measurable to ensure clear monitoring and recording of progress in pupils' learning.

The quality of provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders was very good. Classroom environments and routines had been arranged to support the wellbeing, learning and participation of pupils with autism. The school adopted a strengths-based approach which emphasised the abilities, personal accomplishments, talents and preferences of the pupils in the special classes. Integration and reverse integration with mainstream classes were managed successfully.

The quality of both summative and formative assessment was very good. The whole-school policy documented the importance of assessment in enabling teachers to modify their programmes and methodologies, to ensure that individual and group-learning needs were appropriately addressed. A broad range of assessment strategies was successfully employed. Screening tests operated as a rigorous activity, in particular in the infant and junior classes. A significant feature of practice was the focus on pupil self and peer-assessment which included strategies such as personal goal setting and error analysis.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was very good. Staff worked collaboratively to ensure that Scoil Oilibhéir provided a positive, welcoming and a predictable start to the school day for its pupils. The school's focus on wellbeing was formalised with the establishment of a wellbeing committee which had drawn up and overseen the implementation of a wellbeing charter. The work of the HSCL was highly commended in relation to strengthening links between the home and school. She had forged particularly positive relations with families experiencing significant levels of educational disadvantage.

The school culture where respect, inclusion, care and diversity was promoted provided strong support for pupils' wellbeing. Programmes including the Incredible Years and Friends for Life were implemented consistently. Skills in the regulation of emotions and behaviours were taught and the school had begun to implement restorative approaches to behavioural management. Many classrooms had quiet areas where pupils could rest and regulate their own behaviours.

There was a whole-school commitment to listening to the views of pupils and a diverse range of pupils was represented on the student council. Pupils had access to an extensive array of after-school activities, most of which were run by teachers. The range ensured that pupils could select areas of interest to them including coding and animation, instrumental music lessons, Irish dancing and karate.

All pupils were cared for and supported to develop as learners and active contributors to the life of the school. The collective focus on the nurture of pupils was a noteworthy feature of provision and pupils' success in their learning contributed to their sense of wellbeing.

4. The quality of leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management was very good. The board of management provided strong support to the school. Board members communicated very effectively with the principal and other leaders to maintain and further develop the community of learning in Scoil Oilibhéir. Through its strategic plan, it has prioritised the building of teachers' capacity as leaders and had arranged professional coaching for some members of the in-school management team. The board facilitated and supported the revitalised parents' association to fulfil its partnership and advisory role.

The principal provided excellent leadership and management for the school. He facilitated school leaders to work together in a collegial and collaborative manner to sustain professional and productive working relationships for the benefit of pupils. He expected and encouraged teachers to develop and extend their learning, teaching and assessment practice. He supported them to take on leadership roles through the effective use of distributed leadership models. He was ably supported by the deputy principal and together, they engaged in frequent processes of personal reflection, identifying and working on areas of their practice that required improvement.

The in-school leadership and management team was committed to continuously progressing the quality of teaching and learning. Team members placed significant emphasis on the further development of professional learning. They had responsibility across a range of areas and coordinated a large variety of projects and initiatives which included, although were not confined to, areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, numeracy, literacy, digital learning, Music and sports.

Representatives of the parents' association expressed strong satisfaction with arrangements to meet with teachers, the quality and range of supports and the breadth of learning experiences provided for the pupils. They described information leaflets issued to parents to explain the school's inclusion in the DEIS programme and were familiar with the DEIS themes which were currently prioritised by the school. They reported positively on their awareness of school policy and referenced recent changes to the homework policy wherein assignments were now described by them, as being purposeful and meaningful.

The school regularly provided placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards of the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and teacher education institution.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

The quality of school self-evaluation was very good. School leadership competently led and managed action planning for improvement in the context of SSE and in more recent times embedded DEIS action planning. Teachers were developing a collective understanding of this initiative. Action plans had been formulated and implemented in five of the DEIS themes, Literacy, Numeracy, Attendance, Transitions and Partnerships and work had commenced on the remaining themes. Baseline data was used to inform the targets for improvement and meaningful actions had been set in place to achieve these clear, quantifiable targets. In every learning setting, the DEIS focus for 2023/2024 was prominently displayed to enable teachers to maintain a focus on DEIS targets while planning for learning. An attendance grid was used in all classrooms and teachers knew what action to take when there were concerns in this regard. The numeracy plan had a school-wide focus on operations. The literacy plan saw an emphasis on the promotion of a reading culture for pupils, and professional development for teachers on comprehension strategies. The school community welcomed its inclusion in DEIS and agreed that high expectations for pupil achievement remained a priority.

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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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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 relation to the inspection report, the Board of Management of Scoil Oilibhéir wishes to note that we have promptly initiated the process of implementing the recommendation contained therein.