

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Scoil Mhuire Buachaillí agus Cailíní
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Main Street Stranorlar County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	199270

**Date of inspection: 04-10-2017**



## **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 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 – Management, Leadership and Learning

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	04-10-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li><li>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Meeting with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Mhuire, Stranorlar is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. The staff includes an administrative principal, sixteen mainstream class teachers and seven special education teachers, one of which is based in another school. The school receives support from the School Completion Programme (SCP). There are 448 pupils enrolled and while the overall attendance patterns are very good there are a small minority of pupils who have poor attendance. The board should continue to prioritise targeted pupil-attendance interventions in order to improve attendance levels. Teaching and learning were evaluated in twelve mainstream classrooms and in four special education needs (SEN) settings.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN), is very good; there are very good learning outcomes and experiences in Mathematics, Music, Visual Arts (VA) and Social, Environmental Education (SESE).
- The quality of teaching is good overall, with exceptional practice observed in a few classrooms; there is scope to make greater use of assessment data to inform target setting in planning for team teaching and in individual pupil support plans.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very effective.
- The principal demonstrates significant strengths in aspects of leadership and management; the in-school management team (ISM) has not yet established appropriate roles to support its curriculum leadership role.
- A special education teacher is deployed currently as a mainstream class teacher and this deployment is in breach of the terms of the Circular 0013/2017.
- The school is not engaging currently with the school self-evaluation process due to industrial action; previous work on the improvement of numeracy has been very successful.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessment data should be used more effectively to inform team teaching and individual pupil support plans.
- Curricular leadership should be prioritised by the ISM team with specific delineation of duties to support curriculum implementation, monitoring and review.
- The board should ensure that all special education teachers are deployed in compliance with Circular 0013/2017.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The quality of learning is very good overall. Pupils' demonstrated high levels of engagement and participated well in their learning activities. They displayed very high levels of ability to recall and discuss previous learning experiences and to make connections in their learning across various subjects. They were able to work independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner. During the evaluation, pupils displayed very good skill development in Music, Visual Arts and in SESE in particular.
- In Mathematics, pupils have a good understanding of concepts and use concrete materials effectively to support their learning. Their application of mathematical strategies for problem solving are very well developed and they use them competently during learning activities. They have a very good capacity to relate the learning to real-life scenarios. Pupils' attainments in mental mathematics have improved significantly, as evidenced in assessment results in the last three years.
- In the infant classes evaluated, pupils have access to a wide range of purposeful and playful learning experiences. Possibilities exist to promote pupils' early literacy and numeracy learning in the distinct play areas of the *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* environment.
- Pupils demonstrated very good oral and presentation skills in most classrooms observed. They could articulate their previous learning very well in SESE subjects and in the various projects completed across the curriculum. Pupils can read with fluency in both English and Irish; extended reading materials in Irish would enhance current provision in this area. The standard of pupils' writing in English is of very high quality overall; however, handwriting and presentation skills need improvement in a minority of classes. Pupils engage with a wide repertoire of poetry and enjoy their experiences in reciting poems particularly in the junior section.
- Pupils' listening, oral and written skills in Irish require improvement.
- In Science, the pupils have a very high capacity for scientific thinking and are able to recall the processes involved in a variety of experiments on display in various classrooms. Very high-quality work was observed on display in classrooms and in school open areas. The quality of this work in Visual Arts demonstrates a very high level of creative imagination and skill.
- Pupils in all classes can sing a variety of songs across a wide range of genre, including songs in the Irish language, very well and with enjoyment. Performance in music is a regular feature of classroom and school life. Pupils play percussion and musical instruments confidently. In performances observed during the evaluation, the singing of the school choir was excellent.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with exceptional practice observed in a few classrooms. Teachers were very well prepared for the lessons. Learning environments were very stimulating in almost all classrooms. The teaching approaches ranged from effective in the majority of classes to highly effective practice in a few settings. However, a greater balance is needed between the teachers' input and the pupils' productive participation and response in a few classes.
- Whole-school and curricular planning is available for all subject areas. In a few cases, teachers' curriculum planning was of a very high quality in terms of content, differentiation and

assessment practices in particular. However, the quality of teachers' planning was inconsistent in the majority of classrooms. Curricular content is not developmental and progressive in all classroom plans. The very effective practice in planning evident in a few classrooms should be shared and developed across the school as means to assist teachers to plan for better continuity and progression in the content taught at different class levels.

- Teachers use a purposeful range of questioning techniques and the whole-school emphasis on language development is very successful. Almost all teachers agreed, in teachers' questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation, that they collaborate well and share good practice with each other. In questionnaire responses, almost all parents agreed that teaching is good in the school.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with SEN is good. Teachers have classroom support plans in place for pupils with identified needs; however, all teachers should include more specific differentiation of approaches to assist them in responding to pupils varying learning needs more effectively.
- While the quality of assessment overall is good, there is scope for a more cohesive approach in this area. Individual teachers have compiled a wide range of assessment data to assess pupils' progress but assessment data is not used effectively to inform team teaching and individual pupil support plans. In a few lessons, exemplary practice *in assessment for learning* was noted. It is recommended that this very effective practice be shared among all teachers to promote pupils' self-assessment and peer-assessment incrementally across the school. There should be greater use of information from professional reports in formulating specific and measurable targets for pupils with specific and additional learning needs.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. The principal and staff foster a genuine commitment to the holistic development of each pupil. Respectful interactions between teachers and pupils and pupils and their peers were evident.
- There are very good links with external agencies to support and promote positive well-being. A wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities is organised by the school including a homework and breakfast club. Although there are some valuable strategies in place for attendance, specific targets and ongoing monitoring are required.
- In Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that their child is safe and well looked after therein. Almost all pupils agreed that their teacher listens to them and pays attention to what they say and that there are clear rules against hurting others.
- In the Inspectorate questionnaire, half of the pupils agreed that they have a say in how things are done in the school. Consideration should be given to the establishment of pupil council to promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice and pupil leadership.
- Parental responses to the questionnaire indicate that further information in relation to homework and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) should be provided to them. While the school shares the policies with parents as they are reviewed, parental involvement should be promoted in policy development and procedure.
- 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*.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- Leadership and management are effective. The principal demonstrates significant strengths in his work and his approach is very highly effective in respect of many aspects of leadership and management. The day-to-day running of the school is highly effective. The principal and ISM team model and develop a strong culture of mutual trust and respect. The principal fosters a very effective and positive school climate that encourages respectful interactions and communication at all levels, including communication with teachers, the board of management, pupils, parents and the wider community. Collaboration and teamwork structures are very well established. The board supports teachers' ongoing professional development that enrich pupils' learning in a range of areas. The principal and board are alert and responsive to the changing needs of the school.
- The ISM team undertakes a wide range of duties diligently. It has not yet established fully appropriate roles to support its curriculum leadership role. Curricular leadership should be prioritised by the ISM team with specific delineation of duties to support curriculum implementation, monitoring and review.
- The management of communications and relations with the school community is a significant strength of the school. The parents' association provides very good support.
- The management of pupils is very good. Teachers succeed in creating inclusive and pupil-centred learning environments. Whole-school approaches to positive pupil management are implemented very successfully.
- The management of the current physical resources is very good. Teaching and learning resources are comprehensive, highly organised and accessible, and teachers utilise the resources effectively to enhance pupils' learning experiences. School staff are managed effectively; however, a special education teacher is deployed currently as a mainstream class teacher and this deployment is in breach of the terms of the Circular 0013/2017. The board should ensure that all teachers are deployed in compliance with the Circular.

#### **5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The school is not currently engaging with SSE due to industrial action. The quality of planning and reports presented during the inspection indicates that the school engaged very successfully in SSE until 2015. The principal and those leading SSE used the process effectively to manage change in teachers' classroom practice. For example, teachers have made concerted efforts to improve practice in approaches to teaching mental mathematics and spellings. The progress and outcomes of the SSE process should be communicated to the school community annually.
- The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is excellent due to the significant expertise and dedication of management and teachers.

## **Appendix**

School response to the report

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management welcomes this very positive report which is an affirmation of the continuing work of our school team in providing a high-quality education for the children in our locality. The Board wishes to have noted in the report an acknowledgement of the work being done in the following areas which greatly enhance the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of all of the children in our school: Sport, Drama, ICT, Green Schools, Multi-cultural Events, Aistear, Social Groups and Library activities. In particular the work, commitment and organisational skills of the ISM team in each of these areas, in accordance with the brief given to them, is worthy of much praise. Our school is at the heart of life in our community and the children's lives are greatly enriched through their regular involvement in many sporting, musical, cultural, social and community projects.

### **Part B: 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 notes the recommendations and will endeavour to address them to ensure that the high standard of teaching and learning in our school is maintained.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;