



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Asicus
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Golf Course Road Strandhill Co. Sligo
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	15004P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	18-10-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	30/01/2024

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.

1. 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 and that they are aware of their roles and

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). 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.	responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.
---	---

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Date of inspection	18-10-2023
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• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus group	<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

School context

Scoil Asicus is a co-educational primary school located in Strandhill, Co. Sligo. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. At the time of the evaluation, it had an administrative principal, ten mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers (SETs) based in the school. It also had the services of a part-time SET who provided for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). There were 258 pupils enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning was good; pupils were motivated and were provided with numerous opportunities to be active in their learning.
- The overall quality of the teaching observed was very good; teachers' preparation was highly effective.
- The school provided high quality support for pupils' wellbeing.
- The overall quality of leadership and management in the school was good; the board has provided a modern, clean and well-resourced learning environment for all pupils.
- The quality of school self-evaluation was good.

Recommendations

- Curriculum leadership should be significantly developed to ensure a whole-school approach to teaching and learning.
- Stakeholders in the school community should be provided with greater opportunities to input into policy development and the school self-evaluation process.
- School management should put structures in place to enable teachers to deliver a more balanced curriculum in PE and in the Arts.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was of a high standard. The pupils were motivated as learners, responded well to questioning and engaged collaboratively with their peers and their teachers. Learning achievements across the curriculum were celebrated through displays of projects, art samples and pupils' work on corridors and in learning settings.
- In the infant classes, pupils' language skills were supported effectively through the provision of *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and well-planned literacy stations.
- Pupils in all classes engaged in silent reading, choosing high-quality books from class libraries. To enhance pupils' oral language skills, the school should extend its focus for improvement to the further development of listening and debating skills. The standard of pupils' handwriting and presentation skills varied across the school. Therefore, a whole-school approach to the development of both should be adopted. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of some of the writing genres in English. It is recommended that the spoken text types developed in oral language should be aligned with the writing genres. Similarly, creative writing in Irish needs to be developed accordingly.
- Bhí foclóir agus nathanna cainte sa Ghaeilge ar eolas ag na daltaí. Ba chóir do na hoidí úsáid a bhaint as an gcur chuige cumarsáideach chun deiseanna sa bhreis a thabhairt do na daltaí Gaeilge ó bhéal a úsáid. *Pupils knew words and phrases in Irish. The teachers need to use the communicative approach to give pupils additional opportunities to use the language.*
- Pupils' achievement in Mathematics was commendable overall. The learning activities were engaging and pupils were enabled to discuss their learning. A majority of pupils, in their questionnaire responses, indicated that they enjoyed Mathematics. However, teachers need to explore new approaches to motivate a significant minority of pupils who reported otherwise. Pupils' digital learning was progressing well but the pupils in the focus group discussion expressed a desire to use digital technologies further in their work.
- Many pupils have achieved success in athletics and other team sports. However, the current provision for Physical Education in the school is limited. Aquatics and gymnastics need to be planned for as a requirement of the curriculum. In Music, many pupils participated in the school choir with great success. Some pupils played instruments as part of the school band and composed music as members of the bell orchestra. They have developed a good knowledge of musical literacy through these opportunities.
- The provision for the Arts subjects needs to be reviewed to ensure that the pupils are exposed to a broad and balanced curriculum. A greater focus should be placed on the role of creativity and imagination in the implementation of the Visual Arts curriculum.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching was very good. Interactions in the lessons were positive and teachers provided a stimulating learning environment. Teachers employed a wide range of teaching approaches, including appropriate questioning and the facilitation of pair work, group work and station work. Lessons had a clear structure and the quality of the teachers' preparation was highly commendable.
- The support for pupils with additional learning needs and special educational needs was highly effective and was provided both on a withdrawal basis and through well-planned in-class station teaching.

- The overall quality of assessment was good. Diagnostic tests and standardised tests were analysed effectively to track pupils' progress. Copies and workbooks were very well monitored. The teachers should now integrate assessment into play-based learning opportunities and further develop pupils' self-assessment skills.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- High quality support was provided for pupils' wellbeing. Respectful interactions were observed between teachers and pupils in all learning settings. Teachers affirmed pupils' efforts and celebrated their achievements.
- A range of initiatives was in place to promote pupils' sense of wellbeing. These included the adoption of wellbeing as the focus for SSE, the promotion of cycling and walking to school and the organisation of movement breaks during the school day.
- Pupils' environmental awareness was fostered through participation in field work in Geography, the Green Schools Programme and the development of the school garden.
- The school had very good structures in place to successfully include pupils with EAL in the life of the school. They were supported effectively in their language acquisition and had access to multiple resources.
- Pupils with special educational needs were supported in well-resourced learning settings and good use was made of digital technology to help them with their learning.
- While a student council has been established, opportunities for pupils to contribute to decision-making needs to be strengthened substantially within the school. Pupils in the focus group expressed their desire to be more active during recreational breaks.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- Effective leadership and management was evident during the evaluation. The school was managed by a dedicated board of management, who met regularly and supported the principal and staff in their work. The board and principal have ably overseen maintenance projects, extensions and renovations in recent years. The school building and the environs were of a very high standard and were very well maintained.
- Results from questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicated that just more than half of parents agreed that the board of management reports annually to parents on the work of the school. It is recommended that an agreed report from all board meetings be shared with the school community after each meeting. At the time of the evaluation, the school communicated effectively with parents using a range of media which included a newsletter and their school website.
- In questionnaires, most parents and pupils who responded indicated that children are treated fairly and respectfully in the school. However, a minority of both parents and pupils were not satisfied with a number of aspects of the school's work; these findings should be explored at board and school level and strategies identified to address issues of concern. The formulation, review and updating of some key policies in a collaborative manner such as the code of behaviour, homework policy, and social personal and health education plan could resolve many of these concerns.
- The parents' association provided valuable support to the school through planned activities, such as Uniform Swap Day, a Halloween disco and a cake sale. As a next step, parents and pupils should be involved as key stakeholders in the review and formulation of school policies.
- The principal is supported by a committed in-school management (ISM) team who carry out a broad range of predominantly organisational duties. It is now timely that they undertake a significant leadership role in curricular policy development. Curricular policies need to be reviewed in a strategic manner to enable the consistent implementation of whole-school approaches across teaching and learning. Organisational policies also need to be updated systematically.

- The school reported that it provided placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) was good. Teachers worked collaboratively to devise learning opportunities for pupils in oral language. Teachers are currently collating assessment data on the effectiveness of the implementation of this work.
- The school identified wellbeing as the next area of focus in SSE. Commendably, they have conducted surveys of parents, pupils and staff to gather baseline data and identify areas for exploration and improvement. There is scope for the school to involve parents and pupils more meaningfully in the school improvement process as highlighted in the results of the surveys above. A post-implementation survey of parents and pupils is advised to assess success and plan for progression.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board acknowledges the findings and recommendations of the inspection report.

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 looks forward to using the report as part of the school's ongoing programme of self-evaluation, planning and improvement. We will be implementing each of the main recommendations in due course.

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;