

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

School name	Kilcommon N S
School address	Kilcommon Churchlands Tinahely Co. Wicklow
Roll number	180330

Date of inspection: 14-10-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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; a response was not received from the board.

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, Wellbeing).
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	14-10-2019
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Kilcommon National School is a co-educational, vertical school situated in Tinahely, Co Wicklow. It operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Ferns, Cashel and Ossory. At the time of the evaluation there were 93 pupils attending the school and their attendance rates are very good. The staff comprises of four mainstream teachers and one shared Special Education Teacher (SET), who is based at the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning is very good, pupils are highly engaged and interested in their learning, more opportunities for pupils to self-assess should be provided.
- The quality of teaching is highly effective; teachers have high expectations of the pupils in their care and work hard to motivate and engage them.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, the principal provides exemplary leadership and is ably supported by a highly committed and passionate teaching staff.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is excellent; it is evident that the holistic development of each child is central to the work of the school.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is high with the school engaging in a process of continuous improvement.
- The quality of learning experiences provided to the pupils is a particular strength of the school: pupils engage in varied, rich, fun and meaningful activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should support the development of the pupils' ability to self-assess their work by providing them with opportunities to discuss and record their learning within lessons, adding formative feedback to work samples and teaching pupils how to set and review targets for their learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils present as highly motivated and engaged learners. They demonstrate an enquiring mind and persist with challenging tasks. Pupils are proud of their school.
- The quality of learning experiences provided to pupils is a particular strength of the school. Lessons observed were fun, lively and energetic. Copybooks, work samples and project work indicate that pupils regularly learn about varied and meaningful topics. During classroom interactions pupils reported how they enjoy engaging in fieldtrips, cooking, playing music and playing sport. Pupils were observed working independently and collaboratively in a productive manner. Excellent group work was observed with pupils encouraged to work as a team; emphasis was on learning for the whole team. It is highly praiseworthy that pupils in all settings are given creative tasks which promote problem-solving and encourage discovery learning.
- Pupils read with fluency and comprehension in both English and Irish. In parental questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, all parents agree that the school is helping their child with their reading. Pupils demonstrate good problem-solving skills and understanding of Mathematical concepts. They can sing songs, recite poems and play music together. Pupils' achievements in summative assessments, is in line with or above realistic expectations.
- In some settings, pupils could accurately recall details of their previous learning and assess the quality of the learning with ease and confidence. In order to build on pupils' ability to discuss their learning and sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning, pupils should be provided with regular opportunities to self-assess their learning. To this end, teachers should add formative feedback to pupils' copybooks, explicitly teach pupils to set and review learning targets and provide pupils with opportunities to record, report and look critically at their work in order to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

1. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is highly effective. Teachers are dedicated, passionate and reflective practitioners. They have high expectations of the pupils in their care and work hard to motivate and engage them. Highly commendable playful interactions between teachers and pupils were observed in all settings and as a result classroom management is excellent.
- Teachers have very good pedagogical skills and lessons observed were well structured, pitched and paced. Teachers use a range of methodologies and resources to promote pupil engagement. Teachers are clear communicators and, in questionnaires administered to pupils as part of the evaluation, almost all pupils indicated that their teacher explains things clearly to them. Assessment data is effectively used to inform differentiated teaching and learning experiences. In lessons observed, pupils' prior knowledge was accessed and visual cues were used very effectively to embed concepts and aid pupils' recall of facts. Where practice was exemplary, teachers provided direct teaching to explain new learning and pupils were then given opportunities to creatively and meaningfully apply this new learning in a range of contexts. Teachers drew pupils' attention to why the new learning was needed and how it would be used in the real world.

- Sa Bhéarla, déantar deimhin de go múintear do na daltaí scríobh í seánraí éagsúla scríbhneoireachta. Chun úsáid na Gaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh mar theanga chumarsáide, ní mór úsáid a bhaint as seanraí difriúla freisin agus cur leis an méid Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil a úsáidtear lasmuigh den rang Gaeilge. *In English, pupils are explicitly taught to write in a number of genres. In order to further develop Irish as a communicative language, teachers should extend the use of genre writing to Irish and increase the amount of incidental Irish used outside the Irish lesson.*
- There is a balanced and flexible approach to the provision of support for pupils with additional needs with pupils receiving support both in withdrawal settings and in-class models. High quality skills-based teaching is used to provide differentiated learning experiences for pupils. The use of diagnostic testing supports the identification of pupils' needs and the development of a programme of work.
- Teachers are well prepared for lessons, they prepare long and short term plans using a common template. It is advised that all teachers consider how to create notes that can be shared with pupils and used to support assessment processes for pupils and teachers.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' well-being is excellent. There is an inclusive, welcoming and warm atmosphere at the school. In parental questionnaires, almost all parents indicated that there is a good atmosphere in the school and they feel welcome in the school. In pupil questionnaires, almost all of the pupils agree with the statement that they like the school.
- The school actively works to develop and maintain pupils' well-being. In addition to the delivery of the SPHE curriculum, teachers were observed using discretionary time to engage in meaningful conversations on wellbeing matters. A range of other initiatives including Friendship week, resilience programmes, mindfulness and social skills groups are also used.
- A strong emphasis is placed on the holistic development and inclusion for all pupils. Leadership is praised for the energy and commitment displayed in identifying areas of interest for pupils and providing learning experiences for them in these areas. Participation in local and national competitions and events is a source of pride for pupils.
- It is highly praiseworthy that pupil-led learning and pupil choice is fostered at the school. Pupils' voice is developed through their involvement in programmes including Creative Ireland, Green Schools and Active Schools and school-based events which provide pupils with opportunities to choose activities to work on over a sustained period of time.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The school is supported by an interested and dedicated board of management who meet regularly and work effectively to develop the school. In questionnaire responses from parents, almost all parents indicated that they consider the school is well run.
- The principal provides exemplary leadership and displays successful management and organisational skills. She prioritises positive relationships across the school community and the wellbeing of the pupils and staff in the school. She is passionate about teaching and learning and promotes a culture of collaboration among the staff. She is ably supported by an energetic in-school management team who meet regularly and fulfil their wide ranging duties with creativity. There is a strong sense of team work with all teachers assuming responsibilities for aspects of school life.

- There is very good communication between school and home through a range of media, school events and meetings. An open door policy was evident during the evaluation. It is praiseworthy that the school is beginning to use information and communication technology to communicate periodically with parents on pupils' learning. An increased provision for parental input into pertinent policy is advised.
- The school facilitates placements for student teachers.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

There is high quality provision for SSE. There is evidence that the school is on a continuous process of improvement and self-evaluation. The school has identified Physical Education as an area for improvement in this cycle of SSE and a school improvement plan is in place to support this work. It is advised that the school ensures a focus on improving pupils' learning in Physical Education through consistent teaching approaches in Physical Education. Parents and the board of management should become more involved in the SSE process.

- Given the dedication and passion of the leadership and teachers, the capacity of the school to improve further is very good.

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
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;