

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Réalt na Mara (C)
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Domhnach Cearnaigh Mornington Drogheda County Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18767N

Date of Evaluation: 22-03-2017



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils' wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

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 Report

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	22-03-2017
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 senior management team and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal and deputy principal• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents	

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Réalt na Mara National School caters for girls from infants to sixth class. It is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath. The staff of the sixteen mainstream classes and two classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) are led by an administrative principal. Eleven special-needs assistants are also employed along with ancillary staff. The attendance levels of the 445 girls currently enrolled are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good and they present as very engaged and motivated learners.
- Teaching is of a very high quality; there is scope to make better use of assessment data.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very successful.
- Support for pupils' well-being is very effective.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The capacity for school improvement is very strong.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessment data should be used more effectively to inform differentiated classroom practice.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good. They demonstrate very high levels of interest and participation in learning. During the evaluation, exceptionally high-quality work was observed, particularly in Visual Arts and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). Pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy assessments are very good.
- Pupils' learning in English is at an excellent standard overall. Their well-developed oral and listening competencies enable them to debate and substantiate their opinions. They read with great expression, fluency and enthusiasm. Writing skills across a wide range of genres are highly developed. High-quality writing of poetry was observed during the evaluation.

- Pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good. Most pupils can calculate complex number operations accurately and use mathematical language precisely. Pupils connect their learning to real-life scenarios very successfully. They make effective use of resources, including calculators. Most pupils demonstrate a very good ability to explain their answers and methods fully when constructing their own problems.
- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge ar chaighdeán maith ar an iomlán. Aithrisíonn na daltaí raon leathan rainn is amhráin le spraoi. Cuirtear béim an-inmholta ar úsáid na Gaeilge mar theanga neamhfhoirmiúil. Tá an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht ar cháilíocht mhaith sa scoil. Moltar ceangail níos sainiúla a dhéanamh idir labhairt na ndaltaí agus a scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach féin. Moltar, freisin, measúnú a dhéanamh ar ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go sistéimeach agus ar bhonn uile-scoile.
The quality of learning in Irish is good overall. Pupils recite a wide range of songs and rhymes with enthusiasm. A highly commendable emphasis is placed on the use of informal Irish. Reading and writing are of a good standard in the school. It is recommended that more specific links are made between pupils' speaking and their own creative writing. Pupils' attainment in Irish should also be assessed systematically and on a whole-school basis.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very high. Teachers' individual and collaborative planning is highly effective with specific links to school improvement actions and initiatives. Through undertaking in-school action research on assessment, the school is refining differentiation as a key element of its planning approach. Classrooms are visually stimulating and displays support pupils' learning in a highly effective manner. Early intervention strategies are employed very successfully to progress pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Support for pupils with SEN is of a very high standard. Detailed individual education plans, (IEPs) involving relevant stakeholders, ensure pupils make commendable progress. There is a very good balance between team teaching and withdrawal approaches in the provision of learning support in literacy and numeracy. Observed lessons in the learning-support settings were very well prepared. Teachers review their interventions regularly and select aspects for improvement purposefully.
- A very worthwhile commitment to inclusion and integration underpins the highly commendable learning experiences observed in the classes for pupils with ASD. During the evaluation, clear instructional language, purposeful visual and sensory cues and individual work stations promoted pupils' engagement effectively. Pupils are making very good progress in their learning. IEPs include useful detail of the specific development of individual pupils' social, communication and life skills.
- The overall quality of assessment is good. Assessment practices are well established in the school. Pupils' work is corrected carefully and they are provided with regular feedback. Some teachers use assessment-for-learning strategies very successfully; there is room to promote this further throughout the school. While teachers make good use of questioning, there is scope to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged. Detailed summative assessment data is maintained. Baseline ability information is gathered for specific pupils. As part of the overall assessment policy, data on all pupils' performance and ability should now be aligned and used to more effectively inform differentiated classroom practice.

3. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- The support for pupils' well-being is very effective and a significant strength of this school. Their holistic development is valued and their opinions are garnered and included in the decision-making process. The student council is enabled to take a lead in various initiatives such as playground design, talent shows, and competitions to enhance pupils' writing skills. The special-needs assistants provide highly commendable support for pupils and engage in professional development to enhance their skills. In responses to Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all pupils agreed that they like school and that their teachers listen to them and pay attention to what they say.
- A very wide range of extra and co-curricular activities is provided, including Green Schools, sport, well-being and the arts. Teachers and parents are highly commended for their ongoing commitment to this provision. Regular school assemblies afford pupils opportunities to share their talents. Ancillary staff contribute significantly to the overall sense of community in this school.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The work of the board of management is very effective. It meets regularly, minutes are maintained and accounts have been audited recently. The board maintains a well-resourced and safe school environment. In responses to questionnaires, all teachers agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that the views of teachers are valued in the decision-making process.
- The recently appointed principal provides very good leadership. She promotes reflective practice successfully and an enthusiasm for continuous professional development. She is ably supported by the newly appointed deputy principal. The in-school management (ISM) team carries out a suitable balance of curricular, pastoral and administrative duties very effectively. During this time of leadership transition in the school, ISM team members are focused on linking their roles more accurately with the school's improvement priorities.
- Home-school communication is very good. Parents are afforded many opportunities to meet with school staff. The school website and individual class blogs help to keep parents very well informed about school activities. The parents' association is a key partner in supporting the quality of the learning experiences for all pupils. In responses to questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that the school is well run and they are happy with 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*.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- Evidence of work undertaken prior to industrial action at national level indicates that the school was making good progress in respect of school self-evaluation (SSE). Previously agreed targets and actions, as reported to the school community, are having a significant impact on teaching and learning in classrooms. The school is not engaging with SSE currently.
- The principal has devised a three-year strategic plan to further develop curricular and administrative aspects of the school. Several policies have been reviewed to date and staff are

preparing for the adoption of the new *Primary Language Curriculum*. Commendably, teachers are undertaking two action research projects in assessment and well-being.

CONCLUSION

The capacity for further improvement in this school is very strong. Routines of self-evaluation and reflection indicate an openness to change and to continuous improvement.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board are delighted to be affirmed in our achievements and good practices in all areas within the school and feel that this report is a tribute to all involved in the school, past and present. We wish to acknowledge the tremendous diligence and dedication of the staff, the very good leadership, the wonderful support and contribution of the parent body and the exemplary achievements and conduct of the pupils. The Board recognises that this report will serve to raise expectations and develop and improve the school further. The Board is happy that all stakeholders in the school were given the opportunity to engage with the inspection process and to contribute their experience of the school.

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 accepts the need to use assessment data to more effectively inform differentiated learning in the classroom. A new whole school assessment policy is being developed which will guide and inform differentiated teaching in each class. This will also help to ensure that excellent practice in assessment, already in the school, will be used in all classrooms and will further enhance the pupils' learning achievements. The management team will analyse assessment data from standardised testing at the end of each year and the teachers will impart knowledge specifically relating to assessment in their class to the incoming teacher in September. The future is exciting and we look forward with confidence to the further enhancement of the school.

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 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;