



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Ballyboughal N S
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballyboughal Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19001G
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	16-03-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	

# 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 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' 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 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"> <li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement were prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li> <li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement had been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li> <li>3. All teachers visited reported that they had read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they were aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li> <li>4. The Child Safeguarding Statement met the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.</li> <li>5. The records of the last three board of management meetings recorded a child protection oversight report that met the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.</li> <li>6. The board of management had ensured that arrangements were in place to</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school had 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 was reviewed annually.</li> <li>2. The board of management minutes recorded that the principal provided 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.</li> <li>3. The school's anti-bullying policy was published on its website and/or was readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.</li> <li>4. The school had appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.</li> </ol>

<p>provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017.</p> <p>7. School planning documentation indicated that the school was making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</p> <p>8. Child protection records were maintained in a secure location.</p>	<p>5. All teachers visited reported that they had read the school's policy on anti-bullying and that they were 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.

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# Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

<b>Date of inspection</b>	16-03-2023
<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><li>• Pupil focus group</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

Ballyboughal National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. At the time of the evaluation, 240 pupils were enrolled in the school. Staffing comprised an administrative principal, nine mainstream classroom teachers, four special education teachers (SETs) two of whom are working in a job-share capacity. The school also had one full time special-needs assistant (SNA) and a part-time SNA. Attendance of pupils was reported to be very good.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements was very good.
- Teaching was of a high standard with some very good practice evident.
- The support for pupils' wellbeing was commendable with some areas for improvement.
- The quality of leadership and management was satisfactory with aspects of effective practice observed.
- Whole-school implementation of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) was effective with improvement needed in some areas.

### Recommendations

- The board of management should ensure that teaching posts allocated for special education needs teaching are deployed in accordance with Circular 0013/2017.
- School leadership needs to establish structures and practices that result in more effective consultation and communication with teachers.
- Clear structures and processes should be established and implemented by school leadership, in collaboration with the special education team, to enable more effective coordination and provision for pupils with additional and special needs (SEN).
- Formal arrangements to gather pupils' and parents views and to promote their participation and involvement within the school should be progressed.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements was very good. Pupils were observed as highly engaged and motivated to learn. High-quality learning experiences including group work, pair work, and collaborative learning were observed. In pupil survey responses, a majority of pupils reported they enjoy coming to school.
- Classroom environments, including pupil projects and 3D construction models, reflected and celebrated pupils' learning very effectively. Pupils demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the topics researched for these projects and articulated the various skills they engaged with when working as historians, geographers, scientists and artists on individual and collaborative projects. Pupils explained very effectively how they researched information, which included how they used digital technologies, and how they interpreted, reported and presented this information through diagrams, writing genre, mind maps and comic strips. This effectively supported pupils to recall information and make sense of their learning. Similar opportunities for skill development across other curricular areas would further enhance learning experiences for pupils.
- Many pupils spoke of their love for reading and demonstrated great enthusiasm for reading both fiction and non-fiction texts in a range of subject areas across the curriculum.
- Pupils demonstrated a very good ability to communicate clearly and confidently. *Bhí tionchar dearfach ag cur chuige na scoile maidir le deiseanna rialta a sholáthar do dhaltáí a bheith ag cumarsáid trí Ghaeilge i bpéirí agus i ngrúpaí beaga ar fhoghlaim na ndaltaí. Moltar deiseanna breise a chur ar fáil do dhaltáí stór focal nua agus níos saibhre a úsáid i gcomhthéacs abairtí iomlána.* The school's approach to providing regular opportunities for pupils to speak through Irish in pairs and in small groups was impacting positively on their learning. Extending the opportunities for pupils to use new and a richer range of vocabulary in the context of full sentences is advised.
- A variety of approaches to promoting pupils' learning was observed, including whole-class, small groups and individualised learning. While it was commendable that the school was flexible to providing such approaches, some models of in-class support should be reviewed to optimise their impact on pupils' learning.

## 2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching was good; there were aspects of very good practice observed.
- Teachers created a positive learning atmosphere, which was characterised by mutual respect and affirmation. Where the quality of teachers' practice was very good, lessons were closely aligned to pupils' varying needs and there were high expectations for pupils' learning. The effective pacing of lessons, the purposeful opportunities provided for pupils to collaborate and consolidate their understanding were also evident. Where the quality of teaching was less effective, teaching approaches did not fully meet the learning needs of all pupils and there was an over-emphasis on teacher-directed tasks. Greater emphasis should now be placed on collective teaching approaches to support all teachers to extend the highly effective practices observed on a whole-school basis.
- Assessment practices were good overall. All teachers maintained an assessment folder and there was consistency in what teachers collected in their folders including a good range of work samples. In some instances, teachers used these samples carefully to inform differentiated teaching strategies and to monitor progression. Teachers provided written and oral feedback, and in some instances very high quality feedback was provided, which was contextualised to individual pupils. This very good practice should be extended to all settings.

- SEN teaching was provided in a range of settings that included in-class support, group-work and the withdrawal of individual pupils. The support teaching observed was affirming of pupils and interactions were very positive. There were some examples of very good practice observed in both the in-class support and the withdrawal settings. The most effective in-class interventions were characterised by pre-assessment to identify pupils' priority needs, establish effective goal-setting and monitor progress in pupils' learning; these features should be evident in all in-class interventions.

### 3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- Support for pupils' wellbeing was commendable with some areas for improvement. In survey results, almost all pupils reported that both children and teachers have respect for everybody all of the time.
- Pupils were polite, welcoming and well-motivated and this contributed positively to the overall quality of their wellbeing. During focus group discussions, pupils spoke highly about their enjoyment of sports and how proud they were of the school GAA team. Pupils shared their experiences in initiatives such as Tidy Towns and Green Flag and how these promoted their sense of belonging in the local community. In questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, almost all pupils agreed that they felt safe in their classrooms and that they got on well with other children in their school.
- Pupils also reported that the school provided a variety of learning opportunities for different types of sport and music during lunch-time and after school, this was praiseworthy. They expressed very high levels of enjoyment and enthusiasm for the mini-science competition. The opportunity for parents to visit the school and observe all the science presentations was highly commended. However, during the focus group discussion, pupils indicated their dissatisfaction regarding the arrangements for the science club, which was targeted at the higher-achieving pupils in the school. It is advised that the school engage with pupils regarding this issue with a view to ensuring equitable and fair opportunities for all pupils.
- The parent nominees from the board of management reported that the school was the core of the local community and outlined some of the whole-school initiatives that focus on pupil wellbeing, for example, the World Book Day celebration. In response to questionnaires, most parents agreed that their children were safe and well looked after in school. While a majority of parents agreed that there was a good atmosphere and that they were welcome in the school, a significant minority disagreed with these statements. It was commendable that the Parents Association had been recently re-established in the school. This will be an important forum to engage with parents and to support the school with policy formulation, improvement of home-school relationships and the sharing of information. Regular newsletters were emailed to parents and this provided valuable information to parents about activities taking place in the school. It is now timely to build on these established practices to further enhance communicative approaches with parents and the wider school community.
- In response to questionnaires, most teachers agreed that pupils were encouraged to maximise their potential and that pupils with special educational and additional needs were included in classroom and school life.
- The school physical environment comprised a yard and a large green field. Pupils were observed enjoying playing games and interacting with one another during break and lunch time. During focus group discussions, pupils shared their desire for an increased range of resources including goalposts, yard games and yard markings to maximise the potential of their enjoyment of and engagement with the school environment. Formal structures to gather pupils' views and to promote their participation and involvement within the school should be established.

## 4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was satisfactory with aspects of effective practice observed. Management had successfully overseen an extension to the school building in recent years and a refurbishment project is ongoing. The school building and grounds were maintained to a good standard.
- The board of management reported high levels of satisfaction regarding the principal's commitment to the development of the school over the past number of years.
- During the evaluation, the principal demonstrated effective management and oversight of the smooth day-to-day running of the school which resulted in the creation of a calm and orderly environment.
- At the time of the evaluation, the in-school management team comprised a principal, a deputy principal, an Assistant Principal 2 (AP2) and an acting AP2. The team engaged appropriately in a range of assigned responsibilities including organisational, pastoral and curricular areas.
- While staff meetings were facilitated during the year, the organisation of such meetings and recording of minutes should be formalised to ensure an agreed record of collective discussions and decisions across both organisational and curricular aspects is maintained.
- It was notable that in teacher surveys, a majority did not agree that their views were valued in decision-making processes or that the in-school management system was effective. It was also noteworthy that more than half of the teachers reported that there was not a good atmosphere in the school. School leadership and teachers should collectively discuss these matters and collaboratively agree actions to achieve more effective consultation and communication within the school.
- Organisational policies were in place which helped to provide an appropriate structure for the day-to-day functioning of the school. However, a number of curriculum plans and organisational policies were due for review. The board should formulate and implement a three-year plan that details the systematic review of all curriculum and organisational policies to better inform collective practice in the school.
- The principal and SEN team have arrangements in place to support the implementation of the continuum of support through a variety of in-class and withdrawal models of support. Effective approaches to the provision of SEN included the analysis of standardised test results and professional reports as well as consultation with class teachers. The existing organisational arrangements, while reported as appropriate in the past, were not sufficiently optimising the strengths of SET in order to best meet the needs of the current school context. Clear structures to facilitate increased collaboration and participation of the SET team in decision-making processes such as the coordination of withdrawal and in-class provision, are needed. Additionally, student support files should be developed, monitored and travel with the pupils year on year to ensure progression and development is tracked. A broader range of diagnostic testing should be used to inform target setting in student support plans. Parents should be involved in devising and reviewing student support plans annually.
- The partial deployment of an SEN teacher to teach Mathematics across mainstream classrooms should be discontinued. School leadership should ensure that teaching posts allocated for special education needs teaching are deployed in accordance with Circular 0013/2017.
- The school reported that it provided placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes was welcome.

## 5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- Whole-school implementation of school self-evaluation was effective with some areas for improvement.
- Evidence of prior engagement in the SSE process demonstrated that the school devised school improvement plans for aspects of literacy and numeracy. Priorities for improvement included spelling, reading material and tables were identified based on a range of evidence sources and resulted in the implementation of a series of worthwhile strategies. These were having a positive impact on pupil attainment levels.
- School management should now ensure that the SSE process includes meaningful engagement with pupils and parents as the participation of pupils and parents was not a feature in previous cycles of SSE. School improvement plans should also be shared with the school community.
- School staff demonstrated commendable professionalism and commitment to advancing the work of the school and the school's capacity to develop further and take on new priority areas is good.



# **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 of Ballyboughal N.S. welcomes the findings of the WSE-MLL. The report gives recognition to the high quality of provision in our school which is due to the hard work and dedication of the school community. The report highlights many examples of very good practice within the school, leading to a very high standard of learning. The positive learning atmosphere, with respect and affirmation by pupils and staff, was noted in the report. The opportunities for extra-curricular activities and the support for pupils' wellbeing were also found to be praiseworthy.

### **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 has discussed the findings of the report and is eager to implement the recommendations. Arrangements for communication and consultation with staff members, parents and pupils will be further developed to enhance the inclusion of all voices in the future progress of the school.

The special education team, guided by the leadership team, will continue to improve the provision for pupils with additional and special needs. The review of curricular and organisational policies has already begun.

## 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;