

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	Scoil an Linbh Íosa
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Killymard Donegal Town County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17260U

Date of Evaluation: 11-11-2016



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION?

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school. In addition to evaluating management and leadership in the school, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Irish, Mathematics and one other subject.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of leadership and management
2. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. Quality of support for pupils

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

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11-11-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal• Meeting with in-school management• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with the special educational needs team• Review of relevant documents	<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• Feedback to parent representatives• Feedback to board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil an Linbh Íosa is a co-educational primary school located in Killymard, Donegal Town and is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. There are 225 pupils enrolled and their attendance is very good. During this whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Music was evaluated.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The work of the board of management is of a very high standard; it is very proactive in establishing and maintaining a guiding vision for the school.
- The principal, with very effective support from the board and in-school management team, gives excellent leadership to the school.
- The overall quality of teaching is very effective.
- On the whole, curriculum planning is commendable; there would be benefit in providing more guidance to teachers regarding progression from class to class.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English and Mathematics in particular is very good.
- Assessment for learning (AfL) strategies, including pupil peer and self-assessment, are not implemented consistently in all classes.
- The quality of support for pupils is highly commendable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that further guidance be provided to teachers regarding the progression of learning from class to class.
- Assessment for learning strategies, including pupil peer and self-assessment, should be further developed in the school and implemented in all classes.
- Moltar an tréimhse cumarsáide le linn teagasc na Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm go comhsheasmhach i ngach rang. *It is recommended that the communicative phase during the teaching of Irish should be implemented consistently in all classes.*

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management and principal have been proactive in establishing and maintaining a guiding vision for the school. Goals and expectations as a learning community are clearly outlined and communicated very effectively to the whole-school community. The board supports the professional development of staff, and contributes purposefully to the professional learning community.
- The leadership of the principal is very effective and a culture of collaboration and collegiality among the staff is promoted very well. Teamwork is encouraged in all aspects of school life. The principal creates and motivates staff teams and working groups very effectively to lead developments in key areas, and builds leadership capacity. Reflective practice and continuous improvement, through facilitating regular systems of collaboration and planning among teachers, are successfully organised. Regular progress reports are provided to the school community.
- The in-school management team, comprising the deputy principal and two teachers, carries out its duties very effectively. The members work purposefully to ensure that actions implemented through reviews and school self-evaluation (SSE) lead to improvements in learner outcomes.
- The partnership with parents, as a means of supporting pupils' learning, is central to the school ethos. The parents' representatives, during the pre-evaluation meeting with the inspector, indicated that they were very happy with the teaching and learning in the school. Responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that all parents are happy with the school and that their child is doing well. In discussion, parents' representatives reported concerns about the safe travel to and from school having negative impact on enrolments.
- The parents' association actively supports the work of the school through a range of activities. Communications within the school community are very good and the school website is used very effectively by parents to inform the wider school community about school events.
- The management of resources is very good. A wide range of resources is used to enhance teaching and learning. Consideration should now be given to the expansion of the school library to include a broader range of books in the Irish language, including digital reading books. The majority of teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning. The creation and implementation of an e-learning plan to optimise ICT usage and to support pupils' digital literacy development are advised. Ancillary staff contributes significantly to the efficient functioning of the school.
- The overall management of pupils is very good. During the evaluation, pupils demonstrated very high levels of interest and participation in learning. Interactions among pupils and teachers are very respectful and positive, and conducive to good well-being. In responses to questionnaires, most pupils agreed that they get on well with other children in the school and that they enjoy their lessons and learning. A significant minority of pupils indicated in the questionnaires that they do not have a say in how things are done in the school. Consideration should be given by staff to the establishment of a pupil council to support pupils' involvement in the operation of 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*.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The quality of school planning is good. The school provides a comprehensive range of organisational plans, providing clear direction to all staff and ensuring the efficient functioning of the school. Whole-school curriculum planning is good; however, further guidance should be provided to teachers regarding the progression of learning from class to class.
- The quality of individual teachers' curriculum planning is commendable. All teachers design and prepare effective plans in advance of learning tasks and activities. Further clarity is advised in a small number of classes, however, with regard to provision for differentiation of learning objectives and learning activities.
- The school has engaged very well with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. Very effective implementation and positive impact of whole-school approaches in literacy and numeracy were observed during the evaluation. Teachers have identified assessment as an area for attention in SSE and have plans in place to continue work in this area into the future.

3. QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and the overall attainment of pupils is at a very good standard. Almost all parents agreed in the Inspectorate questionnaires that teaching is good in the school. Teachers strategically select and use effective approaches to match the learning objective of the lesson, meet the learning needs of pupils, and open up further learning opportunities. They use a range of questioning techniques effectively to extend learning and to ensure that all pupils are challenged and purposefully engaged in their learning. Literacy and numeracy were effectively integrated into the lessons observed during the evaluation. Teachers work collaboratively, resulting in very good team teaching at different class levels.
- The overall quality of assessment of learning practices is commendable. A whole-school approach to the assessment of learning is in place. The good assessment approaches already in evidence in the school should be identified and recorded in the whole-school assessment policy. The need to improve pupils' awareness of their own progress, as highlighted in pupil questionnaires, should be addressed through the development of peer and self-assessment strategies. Standardised tests in Irish should be administered so as to guide the classroom planning in this area of the curriculum.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go han-mhaith san iomlan; tá gá le forbairt a dhéanamh ar ghnéithe den tsoláthar. Aithrisíonn na daltaí dánta agus rímeanna go bríomhair agus léiríonn siad tuiscint mhaith ar an teanga. I mionlach na ranganna, cuirtear an tréimhse cumarsáide chun cinn le sár-éifeacht; ba chóir an tréimhse cumarsáide a chur i bhfeidhm i ngach rang chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa teanga a láidriú. Chuige sin, ní mór plean céimniúil scoile-uile a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm don chumarsáid. Léann na daltaí le tuiscint mhaith agus le líofacht. Chuirfí go mór lena gcumas léitheoireachta trí soláthar leathan d'ábhar léitheoireachta grádaithe a úsáid. Scríobhann na daltaí sleachta i raon leathan seánraí agus tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta agus na smaointeoireachta sna sleachta go maith.

The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is very good; there is room to improve a few aspects of provision. The pupils recite poems and rhymes with enthusiasm and they demonstrate a good understanding of the language. In a minority of classes, the communicative phase is progressed very effectively; however, the communicative phase should be implemented in all classes to strengthen the pupils' communication skills in the language. To this end, a structured whole-school plan should be designed and

implemented for communication. The pupils read with understanding and with fluency. The provision of a wide range of graded reading materials would improve their reading ability. The pupils write extracts in a wide range of genres and the standard of writing and reflection in the extracts are good.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Teachers integrate oral, reading and writing activities successfully. They ensure that learning activities in support settings are linked in a meaningful way with learning activities in mainstream classrooms. Pupils are able to report on, present, and explain the process and outcome of learning activities to a highly competent level. Pupils can use language clearly and with confidence to work collaboratively with other pupils. They can read with fluency and understanding. The pupils' standards in writing in all classes is very high. They can write for a variety of audiences, in a broad range of genres, and share and discuss their outputs.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics are very good. Lessons observed were characterised by clear explanations, good questioning, effective group work and consistent attention to mathematical language. Pupils enjoy their learning in Mathematics and are motivated to learn. Pupils display very good knowledge of concepts taught and are afforded good opportunities to discuss and explain mathematical thinking. There is some potential for the greater use of mathematics trails and open-ended problem solving to support differentiation for more able pupils.
- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is good. Pupils perform a suitable variety of songs confidently and play both percussive and melodic instruments well. Some good-quality work exploring sounds and improvising and creating was observed in the composing strand. To build on this good practice, more attention should be afforded to the recording of compositions using graphic or standard notation. Some classes demonstrated competence in recognising and singing the pentatonic scale with associated hand signals; a whole-school approach should be adopted in this regard. There is scope to develop the whole-school plan for Music to include detailed content for all strands, whole-school approaches to musical literacy and assessment practices.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is of a very high quality. In the lessons observed during the evaluation, the teaching was of very high quality, activities were well structured with clear learning objectives outlined, and a wide range of resources was used to support the learning. There is comprehensive planning for pupils with SEN. Teachers are aware of individual learning needs, and design and implement very effective individual and group plans and interventions.
- The school supports the pupils' holistic development very effectively. A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided, enhancing the overall learning experience for pupils. Very good relationships exist between the school and relevant agencies to support the pupils.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

As the voice representing the school community of pupils, parents, staff and patron the Board of Management of Scoil an Linbh Íosa welcomes this Whole School Evaluation Report. It is with immense pride that we acknowledge the outstanding standards affirmed by the Inspectorate regarding the quality of leadership, management, school planning and school self-evaluation together with the excellent quality of teaching, learning, pupil achievement and support for pupils. We appreciate that the Inspectorate found the atmosphere in the school to be conducive to high quality well-being based on the respectful and positive interactions between pupils and teachers. The notable contribution of families together with the effective practice and leadership provided by the Parents' Association support the work of the school. We are very proud to have it affirmed that communications within the school community are very good.

The Board applauds the entire community of Scoil an Linbh Íosa, especially all staff and pupils, for achieving such a very successful Whole School Evaluation 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 Principal has already given to all staff his recorded minutes of the post WSE meeting with the Department inspectors, Board of Management, Chairperson of Parents' Association and Teaching Staff on Thursday, 17th November 2016.

The Board will support the school community, especially the teaching staff, to act on the Inspectorate's recommendations as follows:

The In-school Management Team will lead the teaching staff in reviewing each whole school curriculum plan to ensure the progression from class to class is well informed and guards against repetition.

Differentiation will also be addressed in teachers' planning and a new format for cuntais mhíosula (monthly records) will be devised which will link back to the whole school curriculum plans.

Assessment *for* Learning (AFL) will be further developed in the school and will be implemented in all classes i.e. more pupil, peer and self-assessment. Standardised testing in Gaeilge will be introduced in the 2017/18 school year.

A structured approach to teaching in the communicative phase of the Gaeilge lesson will be implemented consistently in all classes following a review of the whole school curriculum plans.

The Board will support the staff financially by reimbursing the cost of appropriate Continuing Professional Development and recommends that the teachers should engage with the PDST School Support Services.

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. 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
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;