

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Aonghusa Community National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kingsfort Avenue Castlepark Village Mallow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20440Q

Date of inspection: 11-03-2020



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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 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' 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 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.

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).
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	11-03-2020
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, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Aonghusa is a developing, co-educational primary school established in 2014. It operates under the patronage of the Cork Education and Training Board. Teaching staff consists of five mainstream teachers and two special class teachers. The school has three special education posts, two of which are full-time and one of which is shared. At the time of the evaluation, there were 135 pupils enrolled. The school has experienced significant changes in staffing and the principal's role has recently changed from that of teaching principal to administrative principal.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good and the majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.
- The quality of teaching is good with some exemplary practice observed.
- Pupils are very positively disposed to language learning and linguistic diversity is recognised and celebrated in the school; the development of a strategic plan to further promote pupil learning in Irish would strengthen present provision.
- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is very good; the school carefully considers the social and emotional wellbeing of its pupils and strives to ensure that their needs are met through a range of holistic experiences.
- The overall quality of school leadership is good but there is scope to further develop the role of the in-school leadership (ISL) team.
- The quality of school self-evaluation is high but would benefit from the implementation a wider range of assessment strategies to evaluate the impact of improvement initiatives on pupil learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school strategic plan for Irish should be implemented in which clear language targets are identified for each class level.
- The in-school leadership team should further extend its role to support the monitoring and implementation of improvement initiatives and of the whole-school plan.
- A wider range of assessment strategies should be implemented to evaluate the impact of improvement initiatives on pupil learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning across the curriculum areas is good. In English, pupils' are immersed in rich language learning environments and the explicit focus placed on developing target vocabulary is having a positive impact on pupil attainment. In examples of highly effective practice, lesson activities afforded pupils opportunities to acquire and practice new language in a variety of meaningful contexts. Pupils read with fluency and confidence. Graded readers are selected with due consideration of individual reading competencies. Reading for pleasure is admirably encouraged through the schools' paired reading initiative.
- Léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Aithrisíonn fórmhór de na daltaí raon leathan dánta agus rannta de ghlanmheabhair. Ach, téann sé dian orthu ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt le muinín sna mean agus sna hádranganna. Ba chóir béim níos comhsheasmhaí a chur ar a chinntiú go bhfuil na habairtí ar eolas ag na daltaí chun ceisteanna a chur, agus go mbíonn deiseanna labhartha chun na scileanna teanga atá acu á mhúineadh agus a úsáid. Is gá anois, plean straitéiseach forbartha don Ghaeilge a chur i bhfeidhim ina bhfuil spriocanna teanga cinnte leagtha amach do gach rang leibhéal.
- *Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to Irish. The majority of pupils recite a wide range of poems and rhymes by heart. However, they find it difficult to ask and answer questions with confidence in the middle and senior classes. A more consistent emphasis should be placed on ensuring that pupils know the phrases required to ask questions, and that they have opportunities to use the language skills being taught. A whole-school strategic plan for Irish should be implemented in which clear language targets are identified for each class level.*
- In Mathematics, pupils have acquired a good understanding of number and mathematical language. In infant classes, they derive pleasure and satisfaction from the very high quality provision of child-centred mathematical tasks and games. In middle and senior classes, pupils benefit from the emphasis placed on mental maths tasks during lessons. Pupils now require increased exposure to enquiry-based tasks and challenges in order to develop increased confidence, resilience and success when problem-solving. The consistent analysis of strand specific assessment data, to inform interventions and improvement initiatives, is also advised.
- Pupils derive valuable learning from their involvement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities. Pupil members of the STEM committee described with enthusiasm the learning they have acquired as part of the schools' engagement in science week, science fairs and in the Discover Science programme.
- The very high quality implementation of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* provides excellent opportunities for pupils to explore and consolidate key language. The commendable provision of authentic resources stimulates rich discussion and is enabling pupils to achieve cross-curricular learning outcomes.
- Pupils' interpersonal development is strongly cultivated through their formal and informal work in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Pupils can discuss at length many of the key concepts of the SPHE curriculum and seamlessly connect these concepts with their own lives.
- Pupils experience a broad physical education programme. The student council's active breaks and the 'Walk on Wednesday' initiatives are positively impacting on pupils' physical health and wellbeing.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching in mainstream and support settings is good overall with some exemplary practice observed.
- Teachers plan comprehensively for lessons. In examples of highly effective practice, learning outcomes are shared with pupils and are revisited during lesson consolidation. Teachers prepare materials to support learner engagement and digital technology was a feature of many lessons. In some lessons, content selection and provision of stimulating resources ensured that pupils were appropriately engaged and positively motivated. Where exemplary practices were noted, pupils were observed to engage purposefully with lesson content and to competently transition between activities. In these lessons a range of teaching approaches featured including, class discussions, collaborative group work and independent tasks.
- The quality of assessment is good overall. Teachers use a variety of methods to establish and share information on pupils' learning achievements and emerging needs. The promotion of self-assessment and the provision of constructive feedback were notable features of effective practice observed. A wide range of diagnostic assessments is used to identify the next stages in learning for pupils with additional learning needs. The school is currently piloting the use of digital technology to support and extend assessment practices.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is good. A committed and hardworking team of support teachers and special class teachers provide high quality support to pupils with additional learning needs. Individual education plans have been drafted and there is evidence of very good collaborative practice between the support team and class teachers. The quality of planning for team-teaching is exemplary.

3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELLBEING

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is very good. The school strives to provide holistic opportunities focused on pupils' personal development, health and wellbeing. Individual interests are nurtured through extension classes and through the range of committees pupils have opportunities to participate in, including, the wellbeing committee, STEM committee, chess team, debating team and the recently established student council.
- The whole-school's steadfast commitment to the SPHE programme is ensuring pupils recognise and deeply appreciate diversity in their community and the wider society.
- The school is praised for the progress it has made in improving and ensuring high attendance.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of school leadership and management is good. Board of management members demonstrate a very keen interest in fulfilling their roles to a very high standard. The principal's highly comprehensive reports ensure that the board is kept informed of school activities.
- The principals' work in organising and managing the development of the school is highly effective. In collaboration with the school community, she has implemented and progressed a very clear vision for the school. Her commitment and dedication to strategic curricular and administrative policy development has earned her very high levels of personal credibility.
- The ISL team supports the principal and attends to a range of duties. It is now timely to develop the role of this team in the monitoring of the implementation of the whole-school plan and improvement initiatives. This should ensure an appropriate range of learning experiences are provided in which pupil learning is being systematically progressed.
- A deeply committed parents' group provides valuable support to the school. Their work positively enhances the learning experiences of pupils.
- The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is highly praised and provides valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school's engagement in the self-evaluation processes is of a high standard and a visionary three-year improvement plan has been drafted. Innovative, action research has been undertaken to establish a baseline of pupil attainment in oral language and the progress of selected pupils is monitored to evaluate the impact of initiatives. It is recommended that more robust assessment strategies be identified to evaluate the impact of improvement interventions on the quality of pupil learning.
- Teachers have engaged in a very wide range of whole-school and self-selected professional development to support them to meet the specific needs of pupils.

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;

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 Scoil Aonghusa CNS welcomes the very positive and affirming findings from this report following the Whole School Evaluation — Management, Leadership and Learning Report which was conducted in March 2020. We believe it to be an accurate appraisal of our school and we are proud that it reflects positively the hard work, dedication, and talent of all in our school community. We are pleased that the report recognises the many strengths of our school and in particular the emphasis placed on pupil wellbeing, as the holistic development of the children in our care is our primary aim. The Board of Management are delighted with the very positive feedback from the pupil and parents' questionnaires and particularly the positivity conveyed by our parent community through the parents' questionnaire. We are proud that the report recognises the good quality of teaching in our school. The commitment and dedication of the staff in the school was also affirmed in the report with an acknowledgement of their engagement with a wide variety of professional development to support them to meet the specific needs of the pupils. The Board of Management wish to congratulate and affirm the exceptional work and commitment of all who work in Scoil Aonghusa.

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 of Scoil Aonghusa CNS very much welcomes this report and we are very proud of the recognition this report gives to the quality of educational provision currently in our school. We welcome the recommendations arising from this evaluation. It is our intention, using the new language curriculum, to identify clear Irish language targets for each class level and include these in our review of our current whole-school Irish plan. The Board of Management is also delighted to report that as our school is a developing school, we are able to appoint another in-school leadership post in this academic year. This will allow the in-school leadership team to further extend its role to support the monitoring and implementation of improvement initiatives and of the whole-school plan. Finally, the school will endeavour to continue to share and expand the assessment strategies that are already in practice in our school in order to fully evaluate the impact of improvement initiatives on pupil learning. The Board of Management and school staff are positively and professionally engaging with the recommendations outlined and are confident that this will undoubtedly enhance current and future provision and the development of the school.