



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Neilstown N S
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Neilstown Road Clondalkin Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19569O
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	06/03/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	19/06/2024

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

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.

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.

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>
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 (revised 2023). 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 (revised 2023). 6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually. 2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils. 3. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment in line with their current policy. 4. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's current policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.

information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, (revised 2023). 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

Date of inspection	04/03/2024 - 06/03/2024
Inspection activities undertaken • 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	• Analysis of parent and teacher 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

Neilstown Junior School is an urban, co-educational junior primary school in Neilstown, Dublin 22. It operates under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. The staff comprises an administrative principal, a deputy principal, fifteen mainstream class teachers, three special class teachers, two teachers of early start classes, and nine special education teachers (SETs), one of whom was based in another school. The school had the services of a shared home-school-community liaison (HSCL) teacher. At the time of the evaluation, there were 283 pupils enrolled. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion. During the evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in a sample of settings.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- This nurturing and inclusive school created and maintained a welcoming learning environment which supported pupils' wellbeing and holistic development.
- The quality of pupils' learning was very good.
- The quality of teaching was highly commendable.
- Support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent.
- The quality of leadership and management was very good.
- DEIS planning processes to promote school improvement were excellent.

Recommendations

- Leaders and teachers should place additional emphasis on the systematic development of pupils' writing skills to ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to develop the content and presentation of their writing.
- To ensure that all pupils have a good knowledge of their local area and a sense of place and space, pupils should be provided with further opportunities to learn about their locality.
- Leaders and teachers should develop more consistent strategies for pupils to record and maintain their written work across the curriculum.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good. Pupils participated enthusiastically in lessons and experienced a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics was highly commendable. Pupils explained concepts and used mathematical strategies purposefully. They competently explored, investigated and discussed mathematical problems using a broad range of resources and made connections to real-life situations.
- Pupils experienced valuable opportunities to develop their oral language including making announcements and presenting at school assemblies. Where highly effective practice was observed, pupils were provided with meaningful opportunities to use new language, discuss learning with peers and engage in whole-class discussions.
- Pupils were provided with appropriate differentiated reading experiences. Pupils' phonics and early literacy skills were taught systematically and monitored effectively. There was scope to further extend the transfer of pupils' knowledge of the basic conventions of print and sentence structure to written work. Leaders and teachers should place additional emphasis on the systematic development of pupils' writing skills to ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to develop the content and presentation of their writing.
- Sa Ghaeilge bhí na daltaí in ann roinnt ceisteanna a fhreagairt agus amhráin a chanadh. Bhí scóip ann muinín na ndaltaí a fhorbairt agus iad ag caint as Gaeilge. Ní mór do mhúinteoirí deiseanna níos rialta a thabhairt do dhaltáí chun cleachtadh a dhéanamh ar a gcuid scileanna labhartha. *In Irish, pupils could answer questions and sing songs. There was scope to develop pupils' confidence when speaking Irish. Teachers should provide additional opportunities to pupils to practice speaking in Irish to develop pupils' language skills.*
- Pupils' creativity was very well nurtured across the Arts. Pupils' high quality artwork was celebrated throughout the school. Pupils participated in choir and other performances for a variety of audiences.
- Pupils demonstrated very good progress in Social Environmental and Scientific Education. They enjoyed frequent opportunities to participate in activity-based learning. Pupils ably described aspects of *materials* and had a good awareness of the strands *living things* and *plants and animals*.

2. The quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching was highly commendable. Teachers demonstrated a very good knowledge of pedagogy and a strong awareness of pupils strengths, interests and needs. They used a wide range of approaches to enrich teaching and to support pupils in their learning. Teachers adopted the principles and approaches of play-based pedagogy and very successfully supported pupils' learning in an integrated manner.
- Teachers delivered high quality, well-resourced lessons which included digital technologies in some instances. They clearly communicated learning intentions at the outset of lessons and affirmed pupils' efforts and engagement. Leaders and teachers had assessed and prioritised the development of pupils' oral language and communication skills very effectively to inform next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers provided pupils with worthwhile resources, including artefacts and photographs, to learn about life in the past. There was scope to develop pupils' sense of place and awareness of their local environment. To ensure that all pupils have a good

knowledge of their local area and a sense of place and space, teachers should provide pupils with further opportunities to learn about their locality.

- The quality of teaching for pupils with special and additional educational needs was highly commendable. Teachers worked collaboratively to gather and analyse data, to devise, review and update pupil-support plans. Teachers employed a range of evidence-based interventions to support pupils' social, emotional, literacy and numeracy development. Pupils in special classes were provided with valuable opportunities to be meaningfully included in mainstream classes and yard settings, where appropriate.
- Teachers adopted a variety of approaches to the way in which pupils recorded their learning including worksheets, whiteboards and to some extent, copybooks. There was scope for leaders and teachers to develop more consistent strategies for pupils to record and maintain their written work across the curriculum. Teachers should ensure that all pupils are provided with regular developmental feedback to optimise progression in learning.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent. Leaders and teachers created a highly nurturing and inclusive environment which supported pupils' wellbeing. The school demonstrated a highly commendable commitment to identifying and providing targeted supports for pupils experiencing challenges to wellbeing and learning. During the parent representatives meeting, parents indicated that relationships and partnerships with parents was a key strength of the school and reported that they were meaningfully included in school life. In parent questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that there was a good atmosphere in the school and that they felt welcome. School leaders facilitated the development of pupil voice and leadership through the active Students' Council.
- Leaders and teachers had developed and maintained strong links with external agencies to support pupils' social, emotional and academic needs. They implemented a wide range of in-school and extra-curricular activities to enhance pupils' wellbeing, such as clubs, choir and yoga. Transitions to, from and within school were very effectively supported by a range of established practices and strategies which had a very positive impact on children. Teachers demonstrated very high levels of understanding of sensory and emotional regulation and provided pupils with regular and diverse opportunities to move during lessons. This had a very positive impact on sensory and emotional regulation and assisted pupils' access to learning.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was highly commendable. Leaders and teachers shared their expertise and professional learning from a wide range of meaningful evidence-based programmes. A range of highly appropriate administrative and curriculum policies was available to support the management of the school. A committed board of management met regularly and were well informed regarding school developments and achievements in teaching and learning and ably supported leadership of the school.
- The principal and school leaders managed the school highly effectively. Teaching staff were provided with opportunities to contribute to a variety of meaningful initiatives and the development of best practice. The roles of leaders and the actions and targets of whole-school planning were reviewed and updated regularly at leadership and management meetings.
- School leaders developed systems to ensure that teachers shared expertise to enrich learner outcomes and experiences. They monitored and reviewed pupils' progress

which informed interventions across a range of domains. There was scope for leaders to develop further procedures to support the monitoring and recording of pupils' work across the curriculum.

- School leaders and teachers communicated with parents through a range of appropriate channels. In parent questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that their child felt safe and well looked after in school and that their child was doing well in the school.
- During the evaluation, the school reported that it regularly provided placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcomed and included among the *Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation was excellent. Leaders and teachers used highly commendable processes to gather data, to identify and address school priorities. They worked closely with stakeholders to set specific and measurable targets and associated actions across DEIS themes. They successfully implemented a number of whole-school initiatives to address targets. They promoted attendance and punctuality through the provision of innovative practices which had a positive impact on pupil engagement. There was significant evidence of the current focus of DEIS themes and targets in classrooms and in teachers' recorded preparation and practice.
- The school had focussed on wellbeing as part of SSE and a number of very successful whole-school practices which were embedded in school life, such as interventions to support behaviour, reduce anxiety and to build resilience. Leaders and teachers held regular care meetings to identify pupils evolving needs for additional supports including nurture and movement initiatives. These highly commendable practices contributed very positively to learner outcomes and experiences and to pupils' holistic development.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St Peter Apostle Junior School is very pleased with this report and welcomes its many affirmations, commendations, and recommendations.

The Board welcomes this affirmation and notes many positives in the report:

- The school meets all the requirements for Child Protection and Anti-Bullying procedures.
- Pupils participated enthusiastically in lessons and the quality of learning in Mathematics was highly commendable.
- Teachers demonstrated a strong awareness of pupil's strengths, interest, and needs
- Teachers delivered high quality well-resourced lessons
- The quality of teaching for pupils with special and additional needs was highly commendable.
- The quality of support for pupil's wellbeing was excellent. Leaders and teachers created a highly nurturing and inclusive environment.
- The principal and school leaders managed the school highly effectively.
- The quality of school self-evaluation was excellent.

The Board of Management wishes to congratulate and commend the dedication and commitment of all staff members, pupils, and parents, for their integral input into this evaluation.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

We note the highly commendable processes used in the school self-evaluation and we will continue to use this structure to reflect on current practices for our children in relation to the systematic development of their writing skills.

School leaders along with staff members have formed a committee to discuss handwriting and the development of this presentation across the school.

Along with this, we will prioritise the development of consistent strategies for pupils to record and maintain their written work.

Greater emphasis will be placed on developing pupils' sense of place and awareness of their local environment.