

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Nathy's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballaghaderreen County Roscommon
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	68067P

Date of Evaluation: 16-10-2019



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

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. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

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, Wellbeing).
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	8, 14, 15 & 16 October 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus-group interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with parents • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

St. Nathy's College is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Achonry. It is the sole second-level education provider in Ballaghderreen and has a large, predominantly rural, catchment area. The school is inclusive and caters for a wide range of academic abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. Enrolment stood at 651 at the time of the evaluation and enrolment numbers have been consistent for the last seven years.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of leadership and management is good; a prioritised vision for future school development has been created but awareness of it is limited to only certain stakeholders.
- A very high standard was evident in relation to student support; the broad curriculum, the range of co-curricular activities, the care structures in place, and the very good behaviour of students all led to a very positive atmosphere in the school.
- The standard of teaching was good overall with most lessons being of good or very good quality; however, some practices were also observed that need attention.
- The quality of learning was good overall, with scope to further develop the effective use of learning intentions, differentiation, meaningful formative feedback and active learning strategies.
- The school has implemented previous inspection recommendations to a high standard, though there is still a need to create an active parents' association.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) is not as advanced as would be expected and engagement with the process is fair at this stage.

Recommendations

- The board and senior management should further expand the opportunities for all stakeholders to contribute to the development planning process and ensure the use of time-bound action plans to implement and monitor progress of these priorities.
- Further development of teaching and learning should focus on consistent implementation of whole-school strategies relating to the use of learning intentions, effective differentiation, active learning strategies and the provision of meaningful formative feedback to students; systems need to be put in place to ensure that improvements in these areas are embedded.
- The board, senior and middle management should explore strategies to create an active parents' association, to enhance engagement between the school and the parent cohort.
- SSE needs to be aligned to the six-step process and evidence gathered effectively in order to inform whole-school strategies and set targets for improvement.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is good overall.

Leading learning and teaching

The leadership of teaching and learning is good. The senior management team was appointed two years ago. The school has taken on a number of teaching and learning initiatives, which are managed by teachers on strategic committees. The board of management has supported teachers by providing opportunities to avail of continuing professional development (CPD). While sharing of learning from CPD was evident, the school should formalise this structure on a regular basis. Teachers that are not involved currently in committees take part in a process of academic monitoring; the work to date is commendable. There is scope to further expand this area and training should be sought to ensure that the potential of the process is fully developed.

There is scope to develop some aspects to further support the leadership of learning and teaching. The SSE process should be focussed on improving teaching and learning practices. Subject departments should be encouraged to engage with the agreed SSE focus and include relevant details in schemes of work. Whole-school practices for assessment for learning (AfL), such as the effective use of learning intentions and the provision of meaningful formative feedback to students, should be implemented consistently. Further training should be sought for teachers in the areas of differentiation and active learning strategies. Senior management needs to establish systems to monitor improvements in the areas mentioned so that they can assess adequately that agreed practices are embedded into classroom practices into the future.

The school offers a broad curriculum and subject timetabling is good overall. Some aspects of provision could be improved: ensuring that students undertaking the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) have access to Physical Education (PE) and study periods are removed from tuition time, and that there is better distribution of class contact throughout the week in regard to some subjects. The school should look to introduce a subject sampling programme for first years, and the possibility of offering additional languages as part of the curriculum should resources become available.

The school has made good progress in the implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework. Through consultation with staff, it was decided to operate with forty-minute lesson periods and to have ten subjects for certification. Teachers have engaged with the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) training and planning for Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings.

The Transition Year (TY) programme is well subscribed and students reported favourably about their experiences. There is scope for the subject sampling layer in TY to have more options to support students' subject selection for the Leaving Certificate. Currently, students take part in work experience every Friday with outings and activities taking place during the year on the other weekdays and, as a result, this timetabling setup is impacting negatively on the delivery of core and sampling subjects. The school should reduce the time spent on work experience and try to schedule as many of the outings, community and social projects and activities on the Friday so as to improve class contact during the week.

The school should consider undertaking a curriculum review to address all issues related to subject choice, subject availability and the timetable.

The care for students is of a very high standard. The importance of student care is promoted through the effective tutor system and a dedicated care team which meets regularly to agree on actions to

support students. Student and parent survey responses showed high levels of satisfaction with regard to student welfare.

The code of behaviour, through the actions of teachers, tutors and year heads, ensures that there is a good ladder of referral for behavioural issues. Student feedback indicated that there were some inconsistencies in relation to how the code is applied; the school should investigate this further. The staff should review the demerit system for minor misbehaviours and give consideration to dealing with the non-completion of homework in a different manner. The school should also consider a more effective and systematic method for the implementation of the merit system for positive behaviour.

The organisation for special educational needs (SEN) is very good. Individualised student support files, which outline strengths and areas of need, are available. These files include short, medium and long-term targets for improvement for the students and this information is made available to staff. However, the implementation of the strategies and targets outlined in the support files for individual students in mainstream settings needs to be consistent. The school needs to ensure that mainstream teachers report back their views to the SEN department in respect of the effectiveness of the supports provided to them and the students throughout the term in a consistent manner.

Managing the organisation

The management of the organisation is good. In surveys and meetings conducted during the evaluation, parents, students and teachers indicated that the school is well run and that the senior management team has an open and consultative management style. The board has been attentive to the management and oversight of staff recruitment and the ongoing maintenance of facilities. Statutory policies, such as the child safeguarding statement, health and safety policy, and anti-bullying, are in place. All policies need to include a future review date. In that way, board members and staff can anticipate the number of policies each year in need of review and ratification. The school needs to review its admission policy urgently so that the written policy is in keeping with the inclusive ethos evident. The board also needs to ratify the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy as soon as possible; this is at draft stage currently.

Minutes of board meetings are maintained. It is recommended that the minutes include more detail in relation to decisions made. Ideally, agreed reports should be shared on the school website. Board members need to be provided with greater information in relation to teaching and learning and the progress of SSE, so as to assist with their oversight role in these areas. The board also needs to review the length of the school year. It needs to ensure that all year groups are provided with the required minimum 167 days of tuition time, as this is not happening currently.

The staff and senior management oversee the effective day-to-day running of the school. During the evaluation, a calm and orderly atmosphere prevailed and, despite the large spread-out nature of the campus, students were routinely on time for lessons.

Some good work has been undertaken in respect of information and communication technologies. Teachers are moving towards greater collaborative practices through the sharing of online resources; future plans to fully embed such practice are promising. Parents, in surveys and in discussion, were satisfied with the individual communication channels with the school. Their responses were less favourable about the school seeking their views and with regard to the channels of communication with the board of management. The school does not have a parents' association (PA) currently. The establishment of a PA would be a beneficial step to enhance engagement with parents.

Leading school development

The leadership of school development is good. As a next step, there is a need to revisit the strategic plan. It is in need of streamlining so that timeframes, targets and actions to be undertaken are clear. In addition, all stakeholders should have knowledge of the school developmental priorities with a view to incorporating ideas from staff, parents and students, so that they may all assist the school in realising its goals and vision. Ideally, the board should meet the student council and the parents' association annually as part of this process.

The provision of Guidance is good in the school. Currently, there is only one guidance counsellor on staff. Senior management should look at increasing guidance provision as opportunities become available in order to build future capacity of this department, as was done with PE, so that there is greater scope for students to have access to the Guidance department. The school should establish a dedicated team of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and RSE teachers so that these subjects are taught consistently by qualified and upskilled teachers.

Developing leadership capacity

Good work is underway in developing leadership capacity throughout the school. The teachers show a strong commitment to student welfare and work in a dedicated manner involving themselves in committees and showing willingness to provide students with a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. The post holders reported that they are consulted about their duties by senior management and the post structure was reviewed recently.

Senior management is seeking involvement in the *Droichead* professional induction framework. The school provides placements for student teachers currently. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers and the teacher education institution.

Student leadership is promoted in ways such as the John Paul II awards, Green Flags, GAISCE and the student council. Good transfer and induction systems for incoming students are in place. Senior students are involved in a mentoring system for first-year students. There is scope to further expand on students' roles and activities in relation to this mentoring system throughout the academic year, and providing specific training for this role to senior students.

In questionnaires, very few students indicated that they had a say in how things are done in the school. The school should investigate this further and look at ways to capture student voice more prominently in the future. Going forward, the structure and operation of the student council should be reviewed. The students should be elected democratically and the student council should create its own constitution.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning was good overall.

Learner outcomes and experiences

A very positive atmosphere of rapport and mutual respect was evident and the behaviour of students was very good. The vast majority of lessons took place in rooms which had subject-specific material on the walls and, in some cases, teachers used this material to revisit prior learning.

Collaborative learning was a feature of many lessons. In some cases, better structures were needed for collaborative learning tasks. Timeframes, assigned roles, the size and ability levels of groups should be planned carefully to enhance these activities. The method of receiving feedback from groups should be prioritised in the planning stage in order to maximise the learning for all students.

Peer assessment was used very well in some lessons, though there was scope for improvement in other cases. Peer assessment was best when students were aware of and involved in the creation of success criteria, identified areas for improvement for their peers, and noted new learning obtained.

The quality of learning observed in lessons was good or very good in most lessons, though satisfactory and fair practices were observed in a significant minority. Learning intentions were shared in most cases. There is scope for improvement in relation to using learning intentions to check on intended learning during lessons. All students should be encouraged to use learning intentions as a study aid to reflect on their learning.

Student engagement in learning was good or very good in most lessons. This was not the case in lessons which were largely teacher-centred. There is a need for some teachers to plan for a greater variety of methodologies so that long periods of student passivity are avoided.

A minority of observed lessons included good differentiation strategies. In the majority of lessons, however, differentiation strategies could have been used more effectively to meet learners' needs. In many cases, there was a need for teachers to ensure a greater balance between teacher input and student activity, with scope to provide differentiated homework, to further include students with special educational needs, and to provide high-achieving students with more challenging extension exercises.

Homework is assigned frequently and involves written assignments in the main. There was evidence that such homework is well monitored. Going forward, there would be benefit in varying the type of homework provided and homework should take into account the key skills of classroom-based assessments (CBA) on a more regular basis.

Teachers provide students with formative feedback in many instances. In the main, oral feedback is provided but there was evidence that good-quality written feedback is also provided from time to time. As a next step, teachers should focus on developing both written and oral assessment practices to ensure that areas such as accuracy, presentation and effort are included as part of an improvement plan for students' work.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The standard of teaching was good or very good in most lessons observed. Some very good examples of student-centred approaches were evident and methodologies in these lessons were very effective and varied. Satisfactory or fair practices were evident too in a significant minority of lessons; predominantly, in these lessons there was a need for a better balance between the time spent on teacher instruction and student activity.

The preparation for lessons was good overall. The pace and timing of lessons were an issue in some cases and this should be addressed through careful teacher planning and facilitation of activities. Excessive periods of student passivity were noted, often associated with note-taking from the whiteboard. The school should look to develop students' note-making skills and make further use of digital technology to share content with them.

Questioning was of a very high standard generally. Oral questioning was best when it was distributed, inclusive, differentiated and adequate time was provided for students to formulate a response. Other good AfL strategies were observed in lessons and such practices should be shared more widely across departments.

The overall quality of teachers' collaborative practices was good. Some inconsistency was noted in terms of practices across departments, however. Subject co-ordinators are appointed to run the departments; the agreed duties of this role should be documented. Detailed information is available in relation to CPD undertaken and the structures of the department.

The majority of the schemes of work reviewed were good. Where not already the case, schemes should ensure learning outcomes are linked to specific methodologies and a variety of assessment modes. All schemes should provide details in relation to timeframes and a teacher-review section for more efficient planning. These practices would enable schemes to be used as working documents and facilitate greater sharing of pedagogy and practices.

Subject departments should expand upon their analysis of state examination results. The context of the year group should be taken into account and strategies and targets devised for year-on-year improvement. Minutes of meetings should record progress in relation to any agreed strategies or targets and minutes should be shared with senior management, thereby providing the board too with access to more information about the various initiatives underway in the leadership of teaching and learning.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations is good overall.

Leadership and Management

There have been five inspections in the school since 2011. Good progress has been made by senior management in relation to some whole-school recommendations including reducing the number of suspensions, extending provision of PE at senior cycle, and moving towards greater consistency across subject department planning. Scope still exists for the production of a widely shared action plan for developmental priorities, the creation of an active parents' association, providing PE for all senior-cycle students and continuing to lead improvements in teaching and learning.

Teaching and Learning

There has been some good progress in relation to previous teaching and learning recommendations. There is still room to improve the effective overall use of learning intentions, active engagement in learning, differentiation and written formative feedback.

4. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The engagement with SSE is fair at this stage. The school has strong capacity to implement future school improvements.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school focussed on literacy, numeracy, formative feedback and teacher collaboration as strands for improvement. Some qualitative and quantitative evidence was gathered, but the school needs to gather this evidence more systematically from all stakeholders, especially students and parents. The strategies devised were not always related to changes in classroom practices. Future targets set

need to be clearer and more realistic. While SSE reports and school improvements plans have been produced, these should be shared with the wider school community.

SSE strategies were used in some observed lessons. However, their use was not widespread or sufficiently robust. Systems should be in place to monitor that any strategies implemented are occurring at a whole-school level and on a consistent basis in classrooms. In future, the SSE team should align its work more definitely to the six-step SSE process.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has strong capacity to implement future school improvements, based on the work of the board, the senior management team and staff in successfully bringing about many improvements to date.

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 St. Nathy's College welcomes this positive WSE MLL report and appreciates the recognition given by the Inspectorate to the very many positive aspects of our school. The Board is particularly pleased that the report acknowledges that:

- The quality of leadership and management in St. Nathy's College is good (particularly in light of the fact that the present senior management team has only been in place for a relatively short period of time).
- There is a very high standard of student support in the school
- A very positive atmosphere of rapport and mutual respect exists in the school and that the behaviour of students is very good
- The quality of teaching and learning is good
- The school has implemented previous inspection recommendations to a high standard

The Board is pleased that this report affirms the good practice that exists in the school and appreciates the recommendations and suggestions made by the inspectorate in order to make the school even better. The Board also wishes to acknowledge the ongoing effort and commitment shown by the management and staff of St. Nathy's and commends them on their dedication to the well-being of the students.

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 and the School Management Team of St. Nathy's College have considered all the recommendations made by the inspectorate and are committed to addressing them in a timely and effective manner.

The **main recommendations** will be addressed as follows:

- The Board and Senior Management are in the process of designing more effective systems and structures whereby parents, students and staff will have a greater say in the development planning process.
- Arising from this, a revised set of developmental action plans will be established through consultation with all the stakeholders and those plans will be prioritised, monitored and reviewed regularly.
- The School Management Team is actively engaged in designing systems to ensure that the consistent implementation of whole-school strategies relating to the use of learning intentions, effective differentiation, active learning strategies and the provision of meaningful formative feedback to students are embedded in the everyday practice of the school:
- The Board is considering a number of strategies for creating a parents' association and look forward to having it up and running in the near future.
- The School Management Team is in the process of reorganising its approach to School Self Evaluation using the six-step process. This will result in a revised set of school strategies for whole school improvement including specific targets and timelines. This approach will be central to the implementation of other recommendations in the report.
- The report contains a further set of recommendations and suggestions for improvement, embedded throughout the document, which the Board welcomes. A focused strategy for the implementation of those recommendations is being prepared and we look forward to them being implemented in the near future.

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;