

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

**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning**

REPORT FOR SCHOOL RESPONSE

Ainm na scoile / School name	Holy Family Girls N. S.
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Askea Carlow Co. Carlow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19478L

Date of Evaluation: 07-10-2016



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils' wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

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 – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	07-10-2016
Inspection activities undertaken	<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, and to parent and board of management representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal and in-school management team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents	

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Family GNS is an all-girls' vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The school participates in the Department of Education and Skills' educational inclusion initiative, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), Band 2. It has the services of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme. The attendance of the majority of the 365 pupils enrolled is generally very good. However, the attendance of a significant minority is a matter of concern and necessitates ongoing monitoring and review of attendance-promotion strategies.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievement is good, with some pupils achieving very good learning outcomes; the pupils' high interest and engagement levels, and their artwork and performance skills in Music are deserving of particular commendation.
- The standard of teaching is of a high quality, with some examples of exemplary practice; teachers collectively agree and implement whole-school approaches to teaching and learning to improve pupils' experiences and outcomes.
- The implementation of a number of carefully chosen literacy and numeracy initiatives is having a positive impact on teaching and learning; to build on this work, there is scope to develop further the pupils' oral language competencies.
- Good progress has been made in the development of whole-school approach to assessment; there is scope to extend the potential of assessment for learning.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is of a very high standard; a warm, welcoming and inclusive child-centred environment is strongly in evidence.
- School leadership, as demonstrated by the board of management, principal and in-school management team, is highly commendable; a culture of collaboration, reflection and improvement is promoted very successfully.
- The school has engaged purposefully with the school self-evaluation (SSE) and the DEIS planning process; a review of provision for Irish in the middle and senior classes has been correctly identified as a priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A more comprehensive whole-school approach to the development of the pupils' oral language skills should be formulated and implemented.
- Further use should be made of assessment information in both mainstream and support teaching settings; this will inform greater specificity of learning objectives to cater for the range of pupil ability levels, and the tracking of pupil progress.
- *Tá gá muintín agus cumas na ndaltaí in úsáid na Gaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, go háirithe sna meán agus na hard ranganna.* There is a need to enhance the pupils' confidence and competence in the use of Irish, particularly in the middle and senior classes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good, with some pupils achieving very good learning outcomes. Pupils engage in lessons with high interest and engagement levels. In the questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, a majority of pupils indicate that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- In English, pupils read with confidence at a suitably challenging level and demonstrate a good understanding of the various comprehension strategies. In their questionnaire responses, a majority of pupils indicate that they believe they are doing well at reading. Some high-quality personal writing is on display and pupils experience a wide range of writing genres. Literacy initiatives, including *First Steps* and *Power Hour*, are being implemented to good effect. Building on existing practice, there is scope to develop further the pupils' oral language competencies.
- Sa Ghaeilge, ar an iomlán, léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint mhaith agus tá stór foclóra cuí ar eolas acu. Glacann siad páirt in obair bheirte and cluichí agus aithríonn siad dánta agus canann siad gníomhamhráin le suim. Tá gá muintín agus cumas na ndaltaí in úsáid na Gaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, go háirithe sna meán agus na hard ranganna. *In Irish, overall pupils demonstrate good levels of understanding and a suitable vocabulary range. They participate in pair activities and games, they recite poems and sing action songs with interest. There is a need to enhance the pupils' competence and confidence in the use of Irish, particularly in the middle and senior classes.*
- Good learning achievements are evident in Mathematics, with a number of pupils achieving at very good levels. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in meaningful active and collaborative learning experiences. In their questionnaire responses, most pupils believe that they are doing well in Maths.
- In Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), pupils discuss their project work on the locality with interest. Their artwork and performance skills in Music are deserving of particular commendation.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The standard of teaching is of a high quality overall, with some examples of exemplary practice. The very good practices in use include the communication of high expectations of pupils' learning, clear explanations of concepts and the thorough reinforcement of lesson objectives. Teachers, through their own enthusiasm for the subject matter, motivate pupils to engage in and enjoy their learning.
- The focus on continuing professional development and the ongoing sharing of best practice among staff is commendable. This has resulted in a strongly cohesive approach to teaching practices and the use of particular methodologies. A wide range of resources is used productively and advances have been made in the use of information and communication technology in both teaching and learning.
- A number of carefully chosen literacy and numeracy initiatives are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. In Mathematics, very good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' number facility and a whole-school approach to the promotion of pupils' problem-solving abilities is being implemented consistently. The introduction of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in the infant classes is a very positive development for pupils' learning.
- Intervention approaches, comprising a combination of withdrawal and in-class support, are beneficially employed to support pupils with SEN and additional learning needs. An admirable level of collaborative practice characterises the work of support and mainstream teachers.
- Good progress has been made in the development of whole-school approach to assessment. This includes the sharing of lesson objectives and success criteria with the pupils and the promotion of pupil self-assessment. There is scope to extend the potential of assessment for learning. To this end, greater use should be made of assessment information, in both mainstream and support teaching settings, to inform greater specificity of learning objectives to cater for the range of pupil ability levels, and in the tracking pupil of progress.
- Pupils experience a broad and interesting programme of work in SESE. Good examples of cross-curricular promotion of literacy and numeracy were evident in a number of subject areas including Physical Education (PE).

3. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is of a very high standard and is a particular strength of Holy Family GNS. A warm, welcoming, inclusive child-centred atmosphere is strongly in evidence and there is a clear commitment to the school's ethos of respect, kindness and consideration. Staff members demonstrate laudable dedication to the well-being of pupils, as evidenced by their involvement in the provision of a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- In the questionnaires, almost all pupils indicate that they feel safe and that they can get help from a teacher or other adult in the school. Pupil voice is promoted through pupil surveys and their membership of the Green Schools committee. The planned establishment of a student council is a welcome development.

- A sense of pride in the school is effectively promoted through stimulating displays and celebrations of the pupils' work, including their projects, personal writing and artwork, and the high standard of maintenance of the school building and grounds.
- Good communication exists between home and school and a strong sense of community is evident. The parents' group actively supports the work of the school. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents report that the school is well run, that there is a good atmosphere and that they feel welcome. The HSCL co-ordinator has developed beneficial relationships with parents and relevant agencies and has organised a range of appropriate courses.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management in the school is of a very high standard. The board operates very effectively and is aware of the teaching and learning priorities of the school. Members discuss and contribute to a range of policies and plans, prior to ratification.
- The principal demonstrates highly commendable leadership and management skills. She successfully promotes an inclusive school community and a culture of collaboration, reflection and improvement. The principal is strongly supported by the very capable in-school management team who help drive initiatives which contribute to improvements in teaching and learning. Staff members at all levels are encouraged to take initiative, to lead and to share their knowledge and expertise.
- 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*.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has engaged purposefully in school self-evaluation (SSE) and the DEIS planning process. Areas of focus for improvement in literacy, numeracy, attendance and parental and community involvement have been identified. There is evidence that agreed targets and actions are having a positive impact on teaching and learning in classrooms. In reviewing the SSE/DEIS action plan there is scope to ensure that targets are, in all instances, measurable.

CONCLUSION

- Given the work undertaken to date on the recommendations of previous reports, the capacity of leadership and management and the openness and commitment of the staff to ongoing improvement, the school's capacity to develop further is very 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 Holy Family Girls' National School welcomes the many positive findings outlined in our school's WSE-MLL report. We are very pleased by the broad focus of the report which took an all-encompassing view of the work and life of our school. The Board of Management is particularly pleased that the inspection team recognised and affirmed the excellent work ethic and commitment of both, management and staff, the high quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement, as well as the welcoming and inclusive nature of our school.

The pupils' high interest and engagement levels, their artwork and performance skills in Music were noted as deserving of particular commendation. The admirable level of collaborative practice which characterises the work of support and mainstream teachers; the strongly cohesive approach to teaching practices; the use of particular methodologies and the productive use of a wide range of resources were acknowledged by the Inspection team.

The Board is delighted with the observations made with regard to the quality of support for pupils' well-being of a very high standard and being a particular strength of Holy family GNS. The acknowledgement of our school's warm, welcoming, inclusive child-centred atmosphere and our commitment to the school's ethos of respect, kindness and consideration is particularly welcome.

Furthermore, the Board is very pleased that the positive contribution made by the Parents' Group was acknowledged and highly commended.

We also appreciate the acknowledgement of the very effective operation of the Board and their engagement in the policies and plans of the school.

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, principal and in-school management team, in conjunction with the staff, have commenced the process of reviewing and implementing the recommendations of the inspection team. 'Action Plans' with time-bound targets are currently being drafted. We commit to ensuring that all recommendations are progressed during this and subsequent academic years.

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;