



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Ainm na scoile/School name	Straffan NS
Seoladh na scoile/School address	The Glebe Straffan Naas
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18644U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	04/03/2024
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 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' 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>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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 information to all school personnel on the	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.

<p>Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, (revised 2023).</p> <p>7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</p> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</p>	
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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
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• Meetings with teachers• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupil focus group• Analysis of parent, pupil 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

Straffan NS is a coeducational Catholic primary school in Co. Kildare under the patronage of the archbishop of Dublin. The school has an administrative principal, sixteen mainstream teaching posts, four full-time and one part-time special education teaching posts and one part-time English as an additional language teaching post. The school also has one special class for pupils with autism. At the time of the evaluation there were 414 pupils enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent. Teachers and school leaders created an inclusive environment where pupil care and their wellbeing were central to learning.
- The quality of pupils' learning was very good. Pupils were motivated and highly engaged in their learning.
- Teachers' practice was highly commendable.
- Very good assessment practices were used across the school.
- The school's leadership and management was very good. School leaders promoted and prioritised the holistic development of each pupil as a core value of the school.
- The school's engagement with school self-evaluation was excellent. The exemplary processes employed in the school have resulted in significant school improvements.

Recommendations

- Toisc go raibh gá le scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt tuilleadh, ní mór do mhúinteoirí eispéiris foghlama a chur le chéile a thacódh le daltaí torthaí foghlama *Churaclaim Teanga na Bunscoile* (2019) a bhaint amach. *As there was a need to further develop pupils' communication skills in Irish, teachers should organise learning experiences that support pupils to realise the learning outcomes of the Primary Language Curriculum (2019).*
- As the development of pupils' critical reflective skills had scope to be further enhanced throughout the school, all teachers should regularly organise learning experiences where pupils are enabled to critique and justify their learning.
- Teachers should provide pupils with more regular feedback on areas for improvement and enable them to respond to this feedback through self- and peer assessment. This will further support pupils to identify themselves as learners.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good. During the focus group discussion, pupils praised the highly motivating and engaging learning opportunities provided by their teachers.
- Pupils were confident communicators in English. Praiseworthy early-literacy skills development was observed in infant classes. Overall, pupils demonstrated a very good ability to share and clarify their views and opinions. Pupils' predicted, synthesised and could infer meaning when reading. They wrote for a variety of purposes and independently applied the various text types with confidence.
- Bhí stór focal cuí forbatha ag daltaí sa Ghaeilge agus léirigh siad dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga. Bhí gá le scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt tuilleadh de réir torthaí foghlama *Churaclaim Teanga na Bunscoile (2019)* ar an iomlán. *Pupils had an appropriately developed vocabulary in Irish and were positive towards the language. Overall, there was a need to further develop pupils' communication skills according to the learning outcomes of the Primary Language Curriculum (2019).*
- In Mathematics, pupils demonstrated very good ability to apply their knowledge of number across the strands of the Mathematics Curriculum in order to solve problems and compute for a purpose.
- Pupils studied poetry and capably recited a collection of poems and rhymes in both English and Irish. Pupils did not have sufficient knowledge of poetry language features. This impacted their ability to creatively manipulate language.
- Pupils had regular cooperative opportunities to debate, analyse and respond to areas of learning during a rich range of learning experiences, particularly in *Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)*. Where pupils' learning was exceptional, they were afforded opportunities to hypothesise and critically analyse. This was particularly evident in senior classes in relation to their self-directed learning in Science. To extend this exemplary practice, all teachers should regularly organise learning experiences where pupils are enabled to critique and justify their learning.
- Pupils' creative processes were supported through very high quality experiences that enabled self-expression through areas including English writing, the arts and investigations in Science. Pupils' could not readily use the language of the Visual Arts and music elements to respond to their learning. Teachers should provide learning experiences that strengthen pupils' knowledge of the specific language associated with these subjects. Pupils accessed high quality reading materials including a whole-school graded reading scheme, class novels and digital resources. These supported pupils' language enrichment. Many pupils competently used digital technologies to enhance their learning, for example, to research, record and present their work.
- Pupils experienced a range of praiseworthy co-curricular opportunities that supported their learning and enabled them to apply their learning to real-life situations. These included competitions and projects, visits from local experts, a school choir as well as a range of trips and excursions.

2. The quality of teaching

- The quality of teachers' practice was highly commendable. Teachers demonstrated very good pedagogical knowledge. They prepared stimulating learning experiences which regularly included group work and pair work. Teachers shared the learning focus with pupils at the outset of lessons. Where practice was very effective, teachers regularly referred to the learning focus and checked for pupil understanding. This enabled pupils to describe and reflect on their learning as lessons progressed.

- Teachers encouraged mathematical thinking, estimation and real-life application of mathematical knowledge to support very good learning outcomes for pupils in Mathematics.
- Teachers cooperatively prepared thematic learning experiences. This resulted in very high quality lessons that were purposefully connected across different subject areas. Where highly effective practice was observed, pupils had choice in learning tasks and materials. This should be extended. The quality of learning environments varied. Where learning environments were most effective, they displayed the target language and provided scaffolds to clarify and simplify new concepts and skills for pupils' current learning.
- Teachers used a very good range of assessment approaches to monitor and record pupils' learning progression. These included teacher-designed tasks, rubrics, conferencing and collections of pupils' work. Pupils created an e-portfolio of samples of their work every term. In a minority of settings, effective self- and peer-assessment was noted, for example in the delivery of a balanced Physical Education programme. All teachers should provide pupils with more regular feedback on areas for improvement and enable them to respond to this feedback through self- and peer assessment. This will further support pupils to identify themselves as learners.
- The provision of support for pupils with special and additional needs, including English as an additional language (EAL) needs, was very good. Special education teachers (SETs) worked collaboratively to identify pupils' priority needs, create clear learning targets and organise suitable interventions for support with regular reviews carried out. They commendably included targets for pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development. Where pupils with EAL needs were effectively supported to progress their learning, teachers used explicit instruction, visual supports and provided peer-cooperative opportunities. All teachers are advised to use specific EAL pedagogies to better support language learning in their classroom using resources available from Oide, the national support service for teachers.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent. Teachers and school leaders created an inclusive environment where pupil care and their wellbeing were central to teaching and learning.
- Teachers held high expectations for all pupils' learning. Very positive relationships were observed between pupils, teachers, special needs assistants and ancillary staff throughout the school. Teachers implemented excellent care and wellbeing programmes and are currently introducing a whole-school restorative approach to behaviour. The manner in which pupils engaged with each other and with adults was exemplary.
- Teachers organised a range of engaging extra-curricular activities which catered for varied pupil strengths and interests. They placed a commendable emphasis on pupil self-regulation skills that supported pupils' wellbeing and readiness to learn. School leaders invested in worthwhile whole-school resources to create a wonderful environment that supported pupils' wellbeing. These included a school garden, outdoor learning spaces and a sensory support programme.
- The school established very effective communication systems with early learning and care settings and post-primary schools to support pupils' transition to and from the school. Transitions within the school were also capably managed. SETs played an important role in supporting transitions for pupils with additional needs.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was very highly commendable. The board of management, together with the principal, promoted and prioritised the holistic development of each pupil as a core value of the school.
- School leaders, under the highly effective and visionary leadership of the principal, worked closely to foster a school culture of care and inclusion. Pupils' learning and a system of teacher reflection for improvement were promoted to a very high standard. School leaders cooperatively identified the professional learning needs of all school staff and worked purposefully to promote and improve pedagogical practice across a range of curricular areas. To build on this very successful engagement with whole-school developments, school leaders should consider how to further develop their formal oversight of curriculum implementation across the school to track impact.
- School leaders and the parents' association demonstrated a mutual responsibility and shared accountability for the development of the school. Pupils actively contributed to decision making through the students' council and surveys. An outstanding example of pupil voice in the school was the process for the design and procurement of the school jerseys. The school is well placed to consider how best to expand pupil voice in other areas of school life.
- The school used a very effective range of approaches to communicate in-school developments as well as to inform parents of school initiatives. Parents praised the school atmosphere, leadership and the progress reports they receive on their child's learning. From parental surveys it was evident a significant minority of parents would welcome further updates on school developments. The school should regularly review its communication processes to ensure parents can be supported as effective partners.
- The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. 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, pupils and the teacher education institution.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation was excellent. School leaders systematically engaged with the self-evaluation process in order to bring about school improvement. They sought the views of teachers, parents and pupils, they researched best practice and created specific and measurable targets to improve areas including literacy, numeracy, teacher practice and wellbeing. They organised rich teacher professional learning opportunities to support these developments. The impact of these exemplary self-evaluation processes was evident in improved learner outcomes and experiences for all 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 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 Straffan N.S. notes the many positives outlined in the report and are delighted that the Inspectorate acknowledged the fantastic work at Scoil Bhríde Straffan: The BOM particularly notes the following:

- All requirements for Child Protection and Anti-bullying Procedures were met.
- Excellent School Self Evaluation engagement was noted with exemplary processes employed across the school.
- Excellent quality of support for pupil's wellbeing was observed through the exemplary care, wellbeing programmes and whole school restorative approach to behaviour.
- Leadership and Management was very highly commended with the acknowledgement that our school prioritises the holistic development of each pupil as a core value of the school.
- The quality of teacher practice was highly commended with very good assessment practices observed across the school.
- Very good standard of pupil learning was noted with praiseworthy early literacy skills development in the infant classes.
- It was particularly noted that the rich learning experiences especially in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education in particular in the Senior Classes afforded the children opportunities to hypothesise and critically analyse.
- Our school offered a very good provision of EAL support.

Area 2 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 has reviewed and considered all the recommendations in the report and will take all the advice and include them as part of our School Improvement Plan. We welcome the feedback and agree the following recommendations will be incorporated into our future targets:

- Scoil Bhríde, Straffan will continue to engage in their School Self Evaluation Process using the exemplary practices in place in our school. In conjunction with already identified targets, the staff will strive to further develop pupil's communication skills in Gaeilge through learning experiences in line with the Primary Language Curriculum learning outcomes.
- Teachers will organise learning experiences which will enable pupils to critique and justify their learning.
- Teachers will focus on developing the children's knowledge of poetry language features and the language of Visual Arts and Music elements to respond to their learning.
- Specific EAL pedagogies will be explored to support language learning in the classrooms.