

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

School name	Fraoch Mór National School
School address	Scoil An Fhraoich Mhóir The Heath Portlaoise
Roll number	18150S

Date of inspection: 26-04-2018



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Department of
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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. 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.

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.

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

Date of inspection	26-04-2018
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

Fraoch Mór National School, under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, is a rural, co-educational school in Co. Laois. The school has an administrative principal, eight mainstream teachers and six special education teachers, one of whose duties are shared with two neighbouring schools. The attendance levels of the 232 pupils enrolled in the school are very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good
- The principal shows highly effective leadership and nurtures the holistic development of the pupils with great professionalism and commitment to creating an atmosphere of enthusiastic engagement with learning
- The quality of teaching ranges from very good to good, and teachers' generous commitment to and promotion of extra-curricular pursuits contribute very positively to the well-being of all pupils
- While the teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is highly positive and supportive, there is scope to improve the planning of provision for these pupils
- Cé go bhfuil caighdeán foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge sásúil ar an iomlán, tá laigí ann maidir le forbairt a scileanna cumarsáide agus iad teoranta go maith maidir le húsáid shaoráideach na teanga
While the standard of pupils' learning in Irish is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in the development of their communication skills and they are limited in their independent use of the language
- School self-evaluation (SSE) has become embedded in school practice and, where observed, gave evidence of very positive engagement with the process

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ba chóir don scoil an plean don Ghaeilge a athbhreithniú le go mbeidh dul chun cinn córasach, céimniúil na ndaltaí thar na snáitheanna uile á chinntiú. Chuige seo ba chóir straitéisí éifeachtacha teagaisc, foghlama agus meastóireachta a uchtú i ngach rang.

The school should review the whole-school plan for Irish so as to ensure systematic progression in all strands. Effective teaching, learning and assessment strategies should be adopted consistently in all classes.

- Individual support plans to address the needs of all pupils with SEN should be devised to ensure the incremental progress of each pupil at all stages on the continuum, and weekly planning should be informed by these support plans.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes is very good and pupils present as motivated, engaged learners. High quality examples of pupils' written work and creative endeavours on display throughout the school are indicative of this.
- Analysis of standardised test data in literacy and numeracy indicates overall attainment standards of a consistently high quality. Supported by the school improvement plan, commendable progress has been made in advancing pupils' reading skills through the introduction of an effectively-implemented, school-wide guided reading programme.
- Pupils' active listening and oral language skills are well developed in most settings and they communicate with ease across a broad range of topics.
- As outlined in the school's numeracy strategy, pupils' learning experience in Mathematics is enriched through targeted exposure to relevant mathematical language and problem solving.
- Tá caighdeán gnóthachtáil na Gaeilge sách maith ar an iomlán. Is gá do na daltaí tuilleadh deiseanna a fháil chun a n-eispéireas sa teanga a leathnú agus a shaibhriú agus tógáil ar a bhfuil foghlamtha acu chun dul i mbun cainte agus comhrá saoráideach ar bhonn foirmiúil agus neamhfhoirmiúil.

The standard of attainment in Irish is satisfactory overall. There is a need to provide pupils with more opportunities to deepen and enrich their experience of the language while building on what has already been learned so as to enable them to use Irish freely in formal and informal situations.

- The arts education curriculum is developed to a very high standard and pupils are afforded an opportunity to express themselves in the visual, dramatic and musical arts in a manner that enables them to see learning as a life-long endeavour. Participation in science and nature projects adds a further enriching dimension to their learning.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from very good to good with exemplary practice noted in some settings.
- Teachers create stimulating, attractive and pupil-centred learning environments. During the course of the evaluation the classroom interactions observed were highly respectful and affirmative.
- Teacher planning is of a good standard overall. Where best practice was noted, teachers' individual planning reflected a differentiated approach – a feature which should be extended

to all settings. The majority of lessons observed had clear learning objectives and were characterised by the use of a range of appropriate methodologies.

- Teachers use a wide range of assessment strategies to monitor pupil progress and, where teaching was most effective, adapted their practice so as to address more effectively the learning needs that have been identified.
- Planning for *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* indicates that good provision is being made for pupils' language development.
- The teaching of pupils with additional learning needs and special educational needs is highly positive, supportive and interactive. However, there is scope to improve the planning of provision for these pupils. The school is currently engaged in the redesigning of its planning for pupils with SEN in line with *Circular 0013/2017*. The team should ensure that support plans are designed for all pupils in receipt of learning support at each stage of the continuum of support. The priority learning needs outlined in each support plan and the targets set for each pupil should be reflected in and supported by weekly planning.
- Support teachers use a range of interventions including team-teaching, in-class support and withdrawal of groups and individuals. They should, however, ensure that team-teaching and in-class interventions are data-informed and that planning addresses more comprehensively the identified needs of pupils.

3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is of a very high standard and the wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities undertaken by the school reflects the generous commitment of teachers to the inclusive, holistic care of all pupils.
- Respect for the pupil voice is evidenced through the existence of an active pupil council and through the school's meaningful consultation with pupils on issues that affect them.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. Responses to questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation indicate that parents surveyed are unanimous in their appreciation of the manner in which the school is run.
- The board meets regularly and ensures that the necessary policies and structures are in place to guide the effective management of the school.
- The principal undertakes his duties in a very professional manner and with a strong commitment to the welfare of all pupils in a holistic fashion. Ably assisted in his leadership role by the deputy principal and in-school management team, he nurtures and maintains a positive learning environment where all work collaboratively to achieve high standards in teaching and learning.
- Effective systems are in place to facilitate communication with parents and afford them opportunities to assist and discuss their children's progress. An active parents' association provides valuable support to the school.
- The school website allows the school community to be aware of and participate in school events and activities.

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school is actively engaged in SSE and the positive impact of the process on approaches to teaching is evident.
- Effective and active engagement with the *Primary Language Curriculum* was noted during the evaluation.
- The results of the school's own survey of attitudes to Irish and the teaching of the language in the school which was carried out as part of the SSE process bear ample evidence of the need to improve oral competency and will serve as an ideal starting point when reviewing the whole-school plan for the language.

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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes this report on the work of the school. The Board are pleased that this external evaluation recognises and affirms the good work consistently undertaken in the school and is a true reflection of the school's day to day practice.

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 welcomes the recommendations of the inspectorate with regard to the school and undertakes to work with staff and the wider community in prioritising development in these areas mainly:

- To review the whole school plan for Gaeilge to bring about improved standards.
- To review SEN planning.

The Board is pleased that the school's own self-evaluation process had already identified these areas for development and that work had commenced on these areas before notice of the external evaluation was received.

- As recognised in the report the school is currently in the process of redesigning the SEN model in line with Circular 13/2017 and will finalize this work over the coming year.
- With regard to Gaeilge, the school identified the need to improve standards in this area through its own school self-evaluation process. The findings of the school's own self-evaluation and this report will now be used to guide a review of Gaeilge in the school in line With the new Primary Language Curriculum.