

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Douglas Rochestown Educate Together National School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | C/O Douglas Hall AFC Moneygourney County Cork |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 20413N |

Date of inspection: 07-02-2018



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.

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. 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

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| Dates of inspection | 07-02-2018 |
| 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 questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils’ work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and board of management representatives |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Rochestown Educate Together National School is a co-educational school operated under the patronage of Educate Together. Teaching staff consist of an administrative principal, three special education teachers and eight mainstream teachers. It has a current enrolment of 211 pupils in classes from junior infants to third class. The school has grown rapidly since its founding in 2013. Present school accommodation comprises of pre-fabricated buildings on two separate sites. The board of management is regularly challenged to accommodate the demand for places in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good; scope exists to deepen and enrich pupils’ learning in Irish building on the very good work in English.
- The quality of teaching is high with many aspects of exemplary practice supported by a progressive community of practitioners committed to developing innovative practice.
- The advanced *Assessment for Learning* strategies being implemented are empowering pupils to reflect and develop the mind-set and skill-set necessary for lifelong learning; scope exists to extend assessment approaches to capture the cross-curricular progress of pupils.
- The support for pupils’ well-being is of an exceptionally high standard; pupils’ perspectives are an integral part of school life and their views are actively sought, meaningfully affirmed and appropriately acted upon.
- The quality of school leadership and management is highly effective and has played an instrumental role in cultivating the spirit of teamwork and innovation that permeates all aspects of school life.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) and whole-school planning have been comprehensively addressed and the quality of work in this area is good; this commendable work would benefit from the development of a consultative review process alongside renewed engagement in the SSE process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhanced consultative development and review processes in relation to policy formation, alongside renewed formal engagement in the SSE process, are required in light of the evolving context of the school.
- The integrated approach to language development in English should be extended to Irish and include the development of pupils’ creative writing skills in Irish on a structured whole-school basis.

- Assessment practices should be extended to ensure pupils' cross-curricular attainment and progress is evaluated.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils are curious, enthusiastic, highly motivated learners who derive much satisfaction from their learning. The range of independent and collaborative learning tasks selected by teachers, ensure pupils are intrigued and excited by their work. A most valuable emphasis is placed on enabling pupils comprehend the rationale for their learning. This is empowering them to take high levels of ownership over their learning. Pupils are facilitated to develop meaningful connections between school-based learning and learning in other contexts. Learning in numeracy is characterised by productive opportunities to engage in a variety of hands-on activities targeted at developing their mathematical knowledge, skills and dispositions. Pupils are inquiring, resourceful and resilient when engaging with mathematical tasks. Pupils' learning in Mathematics is complimented by opportunities to apply their reasoning and logic skills to the coding programme, *Scratch*.
- Across the school, pupils' receptive and expressive language skills are holistically developed to an advanced level in English. Pupils benefit from their structured access to and engagement with a range of oral, reading and written text types. Extending this integrated approach to language development in Irish would deepen and enrich pupils' second-language learning.
- Learning experiences are supported and consolidated through the use of a range of digital technologies.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is commendable, with many exemplary aspects of practice noted. Teachers collaboratively plan and prepare for well-crafted lessons. They create inclusive, dialogic learning environments in which child-centred learning experiences are fundamental to the learning process. Teachers skilfully use a range of approaches and methodologies to maximise learner engagement and commitment to successful learning. They employ a variety of questioning techniques to elicit, support and extend pupils' ideas. In particular, teachers regularly encourage pupils to express and elaborate on their learning strategies in a comprehensible manner. Strong emphasis is placed on providing highly integrated learning experiences which facilitate pupils in applying their knowledge and skills across a variety of contexts. Digital technology is utilised as a teaching tool and is an embedded feature of teachers' practice. Scope exists to exploit the use of digital technologies to provide increasing levels of challenge and enrichment for learners.
- Aithrisíonn na daltaí raon leathan rannta, dánta agus amhrán de ghlanmheabhair. Tá foclóir leathan ag na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge agus ar an iomlán, tá cumas maith labhartha acu. Moltar go mór an úsáid sciliúil a bhain na hoidí as cluichí teanga. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí á saothrú go céimniúil agus léann na daltaí le brí agus le tuisicint go hiondúil. Is scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil don chuid is mó a breathnaíodh sna cóipleabhair. Moltar scileanna scríbhneoireachta chruthaithí na ndaltaí a fhorbairt ar bhonn struchtúrtha tríd an scoil. *Pupils recite a good repertoire of rhymes, poems and songs by heart. They have a broad*

range of vocabulary in Irish and they have good speaking ability. Skilful use is made of the use of language games in the teaching of Irish. Pupil's reading skills are developed systematically and in general the pupils read with understanding. Functional writing was primarily observed in the copybooks. It is recommended that pupils' creative writing skills in Irish be developed on a structured whole-school basis.

- Very significant strengths were evident in the quality of assessment. Teachers use a high-quality body of evidence to support assessment judgements and decisions about next steps in learning in numeracy and literacy. Pupil progress is formally monitored during play-based activities. *Assessment for Learning* is an integral part of the assessment process across all learning settings. Pupils are empowered to develop a high sense of ownership over their learning through a complimentary combination of formative assessment methods. The regular sharing of learning outcomes with pupils and provision for formal pupil-teacher conferences is highly commended. Of particular note in some settings is the use of detailed affirmative, developmental feedback to pupils' on their written work. Highly effective assessment practices should be expanded to identify pupils' cross-curricular progress and attainment.
- A wide range of initiatives is in place to address identified learning needs of pupils. Very effective use of the *Continuum of Support* is made. Educational support plans are prepared collaboratively with classroom teachers in consultation with parents. Support plans are very detailed with clear learning targets set. Effective strategies are in place to address the identified priority learning needs of the pupils. Members of the core team responsible for special education have engaged in a range of professional development opportunities to enhance their capacity and efficacy in this area. Short-term planning approaches in special education settings should be reviewed with a view to the collaborative development of an agreed format.

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

- The support for pupils' well-being is of an exceptionally high standard. A strong sense of community and shared values founded on trust and mutual respect, are evident at all levels.
- Formal mechanisms are in place to ensure pupils' views are sought, valued and acted-upon. Student council representatives from second and third class articulated in detail their delight with the learning experiences provided.
- As part of the current review of Social Personal and Health Education and Well-being, the school has focused on developing and implementing a whole-school approach to cultivating a love of challenge amongst pupils. The development of discrete *Growth Mindset* lessons is positively influencing pupils' sense of their own identity and potential as confident, resilient learners.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of school leadership is of a very high standard. The board of management operates in a consultative manner with pupils' well-being central to its work. It has been intrinsic to the establishment and growth of the school and is steadfast in adapting to emerging needs. The board reports that there is a high demand among the community to enrol children into the school and it is actively working to secure a permanent building for the school.

- The principal communicates the guiding vision for the school and leads to its realisation in a highly effective manner. He has succeeded in ensuring that all members of the school community, including pupils, teachers, staff, board members and parents are recognised and affirmed for the pivotal part they each play in enabling this vision to become a reality. His sustained personal and professional commitment, along with that of the deputy principal, to developing the school as a centre for excellence and innovation, has earned them noteworthy levels of personal credibility amongst the school community.
- A highly-competent in-school management team has recently been formed. Members have a purposeful range of duties, meet regularly and are dedicated to ensuring their collective actions meaningfully enhance pupil experiences.
- The parents' association is highly supportive of the school. Since its establishment, it has contributed greatly towards cultivating a strong sense of school community.

6. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- School self-evaluation (SSE) and whole-school planning have been comprehensively addressed and the quality of work in this area is good. The development of a consultative review process alongside renewed formal engagement in the SSE process will build on this commendable work.
- The whole-school plan consists of clear, coherent organisational policies and curricular plans which provide for very good progression in pupils' learning. The growing nature of the school requires class content on curricular plans be expanded each year. Future review of whole-school curricular plans should ensure that the very good detail recorded in some curricular plans be applied to all curriculum areas. This consultative review should also provide opportunities to capture evolved practices which have emerged since the initial ratification of these plans.
- The school has engaged with a range of improvement initiatives focused on enhancing learner experiences and outcomes. Although the school is not currently formally engaging in the School Self-Evaluation process due to industrial action, previous improvement plans with agreed targets and actions are having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

6. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in both sites.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 <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; |

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 Rochestown Educate Together National School accepts our Whole School Evaluation (Management, Leadership and Learning) report. Our Board feels that the report reflects our caring approach to education while also noting the development of our school as a centre of excellence and innovation.

The recognition of our team as a progressive community of practitioners is very affirming of the professional and caring approach taken by teachers, SNAs and secretary. We look forward to the future growth of our school where we will continue to provide choice and excellent education for the Rochestown, Douglas and wider Cork south suburbs community.

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

Our Board of Management welcomes the recommendations and has already taken steps to implement some of them. Our school has:

- formally reengaged with the School Self Evaluation (SSE) process as industrial action regarding SSE was lifted in February 2018.
- commenced an initiative to develop pupils' creative writing skills in Irish from First Class to Third Class. This initiative was informed by our school's attendance at a recent whole school training seminar on the new Primary Language Curriculum.
- reaffirmed the very significant strengths in assessment practices noted by our inspectors. We will extend these practices to the area of Physical Education (PE) for the 2018-19 school year.
- recognised that the recommendation for enhanced consultative development and review is a timely one considering our schools rapid growth. Our Board has already taken steps in this regard through engagement with our Parents' Association and the creation of PA sub-committees to consult on our new building projects and traffic management arrangements. These structures will be replicated in the 2018-19 school year to review other policy areas/curricular plans.