An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

School name	Glenbrien N S
School address	Ballinastraw Glenbrien Co. Wexford
Roll number	13299E

Date of inspection: 16-10-2020

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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 inspector(s) 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 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).
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	16-10-2020
Inspection activities undertaken • 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	• 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

Glenbrien N S is a co-educational, vertical primary school situated in the village of Glenbrien in Co Wexford. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are eighty-seven pupils across three mainstream classes. The attendance of pupils is generally very good. This evaluation was completed in two parts; on March 11 2020 in-school inspection activities began, all schools were closed on March 12 due to Covid-19. It was not possible to complete the evaluation until schools reopened in September. Classroom observations, questionnaires and interactions with pupils occurred in March and meetings were held in October 2020. In the interim, enrolment has increased and an additional mainstream teacher has been appointed.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is commendable and pupils present as interested learners; there is scope to develop their oral language skills more systematically.
- The overall quality of teaching is good with some excellent practice observed, teachers are dedicated practitioners who demonstrate high levels of commitment to the pupils in their care.
- Approaches to assessment at the school are good with some noteworthy practice in evidence, there is need to extend this good practice to all curricular areas and all settings.
- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is very good, there is a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in the school.
- The quality of leadership and management is effective, while many of the teachers are newly appointed there is a strong sense of team work and collegiality among the staff.
- The overall quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is good and agreed actions have been achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A consistent whole-school approach to the teaching of oral language skills in Irish and English should be developed which features benchmarks for success at each class level.
- The school should further enhance its approaches to the collection, analysis and use of assessment data.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. Achievement in literacy and numeracy is at a very good standard for almost all pupils. They could sing, recite poems, and recall previous learning with ease. In the majority of lessons observed, pupils achieved and surpassed the learning intention for the lesson. They presented as confident, motivated learners and classrooms were busy, productive places.
- For the most part, excellent classroom environments celebrate and reflect pupils' learning across the curriculum. There is a broad range of creative, inquiry-based learning on display and pupils present their work to a very high standard with good penmanship and they can write confidently in a number of genres.
- Pupils read fluently in both English and Irish and show very good comprehension of what they have read. Pupils in the junior classes can use a range of decoding and phonics skills as they read. *Aistear* is used to great effect in the infant classes to support pupils' reasoning and language development. During classroom interactions, pupils were eager to share their learning and demonstrated a very wide vocabulary. Some pupils found it difficult to sustain conversation and use language for a range of purposes. There is scope to enhance their oral language skills in English and Irish. In order to further develop pupils' oral language skills it is recommended that the school develop a consistent whole-school approach to oral language to both English and Irish, with clearly identified success criteria for each class level.
- In almost all settings, high quality learning experiences are provided to pupils. They were observed persisting with their learning and engaging in meaningful independent and collaborative tasks. Many of the activities were differentiated to take into account the range of needs. Pupils use project work, fieldtrips, digital resources and the outdoor environment to support their learning. Highly effective, pupil-led learning experiences were observed where pupils were given opportunities to use concrete materials to explore and discover new concepts in Mathematics. While all pupils engaged with tasks, some pupils experienced difficulties in sustaining their engagement and completing their tasks. Teachers should ensure that they plan and provide lessons which are enjoyable and pupil engagement is maintained at high levels throughout the school

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- While the overall quality of teaching is good, practice observed ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers are dedicated practitioners who demonstrate high levels of commitment to the pupils in their care. Teachers' individual planning is of a high standard. In almost all settings, positive, respectful and playful interactions were observed between teachers and pupils. Lessons observed were well structured and new learning was clearly communicated to pupils. Where practice was highly effective, teachers used a wide range of active methodologies to engage pupils. Direct teaching was used very effectively to show pupils how to successfully complete activities. Teachers communicated high expectations to pupils and there was a strong emphasis placed on consolidation of learning. This very good practice should be extended to all settings.
- The provision for pupils with additional needs is a particular strength of the school. Lessons observed were highly effective: they focused on skills development and featured multisensory approaches. Playful and calm interactions were observed between the teacher and pupils and it is evident that pupils enjoy their lessons.

- Approaches to assessment are good. Teachers maintain a comprehensive assessment file on each pupil. This includes work samples, anecdotal notes and cross-curricular checklists. The inclusion of creative tasks in this portfolio is particularly noteworthy. Teachers reported that they are developing a consistent approach to the assessment of pupils' progress in Physical Education. During lessons pupils work in pairs to complete tasks, digitally record the tasks and subsequently review the quality of the task using a number of success criteria. This work is highly praised and merits further extension across the curriculum and in all classes. The school is advised to develop a consistent approach to the collection, analysis and meaningful use of assessment data across all settings and subjects. The addition of formative feedback, focused on identifying positive elements and next steps, should be included in pupils' copybooks in order to support pupils in learning how to improve their work.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is very good and there is a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in evidence. The holistic development of the pupils is prioritised through a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes. The school runs a rich before and after school programme which aims to identify areas of interest for each pupil. They recently achieved the Health Promoting Schools Flag for their work on supporting pupils' wellbeing. The school operate a buddy system which supports friendship among the whole-school community. Pupils are proud of their school and eager to share the merits of their school. In questionnaires responses, most pupils indicated that they do not know or do not consider that they have a say in how things are done at the school. The school should identify structures to augment the voice of pupils in the school and encourage authentic two-way communication.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership and management is effective. The school is ably supported by a committed board of management, who meet regularly and play a key role in developing and extending the schools high quality resources and facilities. The issuing of an agreed report to parents after board meetings is commended.
- The principal, is highly committed to the school and undertakes her organisational, curricular and administrative duties with great diligence; overall the school is well managed. The principal is supported by a conscientious deputy principal. While many of the staff have been recently appointed there is a strong sense of teamwork and collegiality between teachers.
- Parental involvement in the school is strong and it is clear from interviews, conducted with parental representatives, that parents hold the school in high regard. The parents association is very active and runs an extensive calendar of events each year which support the work of the school and aims to enhance pupils' experiences of school. Results from the questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate that almost all parents agree that there is good atmosphere in the school and that their child is doing well in school. The school communicates regularly with parents using a range of media

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- Approaches to SSE are effective. The school has devised school improvement plans for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The school has used the six-step approach in identifying areas of concern and has gathered and analysed data in order to set specific and measurable targets. It is clear that these targets have been achieved. The school should explore how the SSE process can be used to agree, advance and document whole-school approaches to teaching and learning among all stakeholders.

Given the dedication and high levels of interest and commitment demonstrated by the teachers the capacity of the school to improve is very good.

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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Glenbrien N.S. welcomes the very positive and affirming report on the Whole School Evaluation which was conducted in March 2020 and completed in October 2020. We believe it to be an accurate appraisal of our school which positively reflects the hard work, dedication and innovation of our school community. The Board is pleased that the report highlights the many strengths of our school, in particular the high quality of pupil learning opportunities and the welcoming inclusive atmosphere which supports the wellbeing of all pupils. The board is pleased that the report highlights the provisions for pupils with special needs as being a particular strength of the school. This is a testament to the dedicated teachers and special needs assistants who have worked for the last four years with a special education teaching allocation of 17.98 hours. The Board of Management would like to express its gratitude to the principal, deputy principal, teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff, parents and the wider school community for their ongoing commitment in creating a positive learning environment for all our pupils.

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 welcomes and acknowledges the recommendations in the report and fully supports the implementation of these recommendations.

In February 2020, the school prioritised Oral Language and Teanga Ó Bhéal as the next focus area to be developed through the School Self Evaluation Process. The school applied for and was granted a series of sustained support with an advisor from the PDST. This was halted as a result of the school closure in March. The plan is to continue with this process. The staff, pupil and parent surveys have been completed to date and in the New Year, with the guidance of the PDST advisor, the school will draw up a comprehensive School Improvement Plan which will outline a consistent whole school approach to the teaching of Oral Language and Teanga Ó Bhéal.

The school will complete a review of the school's Assessment Policy with the focus being to develop a consistent approach from Junior Infants to Sixth Class to how assessment data is collected and analysed. The updated policy will detail what is to be included in Individual Pupil Assessment Portfolios, in each class, and also how the data will be used.