



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Óige  
Department of Education  
and Youth

# Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Our Lady's National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Nurney Carlow Co Carlow
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	17796P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	03/10/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	18/11/2025

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# 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 inspector 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

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## 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>Bí Cineálta</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the child safeguarding statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.</li><li>2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.</li><li>2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and pupils/students.</li><li>3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta<sup>1</sup>.</li></ol>

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<sup>1</sup> The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at each ordinary board meeting on the number of cases of bullying behaviour reported since the last meeting, the number of incidents ongoing, and the total number reported since the beginning of the school year. The principal updates the board verbally on relevant trends, patterns, strategies used to address incidents, and whether urgent review of the policy is needed.

<p>4. The school's child safeguarding statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025.</p> <p>5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child protection oversight report in line with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025.</p> <p>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 2023 or the updated procedures 2025.</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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the school plan indicate aspects of each of the three strands of the SPHE curriculum are covered each year?</li> <li>• Does the school plan indicate that the Stay Safe Programme is delivered at least once in Junior Infants or Senior Infants; once in first or second class; once in third or fourth class and once in fifth or sixth class?</li> <li>• Does the school plan indicate that the Stay Safe Programme is taught in its entirety over one school year?</li> <li>• Does the school plan outline provision for learning in RSE across the different stages (Junior Infants/Senior Infants; first/second class; third/fourth class and fifth/sixth class)?</li> </ul> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location</p>	<p>4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.</p> <p>5. All staff visited report that they have read the school's Bí Cineálta policy and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.</p>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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# Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	01/10/2025 – 03/10/2025
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team</li><li>• Meeting with representatives of the board of management</li><li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li><li>• Meetings with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</li></ul>

## School context

Our Lady's National School is a rural, co-educational primary school situated in Nurney, Co. Carlow. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. At the time of the evaluation, the school staff was comprised of two mainstream class teachers, one special education teaching post (SET) and included a teaching principal. There was one full-time special needs assistant (SNA) and twenty-six pupils were enrolled.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good; pupils were engaged and motivated learners.
- The quality of teaching was very good overall; teachers presented well-prepared, structured and resourced lessons.
- Very high quality support for pupils' wellbeing represented a significant strength of the school's provision.
- The quality of leadership and management was very good; the principal demonstrated very effective leadership and management skills and was very well supported by a dedicated and diligent deputy principal.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) was good.

### Recommendations

- To further progress pupils' ability to describe their learning, teachers should place an increased emphasis on their ability to orally explain and discuss their choice of methods and answers when engaging in activities and tasks.
- To further provide for the full range of pupil abilities in classes, teachers should continue to develop the use of visual resources to deepen pupils' understanding and convey meaning.
- There was a need for teachers to use the good level of assessment information available more consistently, to further inform differentiated teaching and learning approaches.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was good. In the lessons observed, pupils were engaged and motivated learners, who responded well to instruction. In the surveys administered during the evaluation, almost all pupils indicated that they enjoyed their lessons and learning.
- Overall, pupils' achievement levels in numeracy were good. They used computational procedures fluently and teachers explicitly taught mathematical language. To optimise the impact of this work, pupils should be provided with more opportunities to use this language to discuss and communicate their mathematical thinking. The use of mathematical modelling and maths talk have been identified by the school as areas for development.
- Overall, pupils' achievement levels in English were of a good standard. Pupils' phonics and early literacy skills were taught systematically. Playful learning opportunities, including the use of storybooks and rhyme in infant and junior settings were highly effective in promoting pupils' enjoyment of reading and writing.
- Some fine examples of pupils' individual writing in the narrative writing genre were observed. While there was a need to further support the handwriting and presentation skills of some pupils, it was praiseworthy that pupils were provided with very good opportunities to self-edit their work and make changes to their writing in light of feedback from their teachers.
- Pupils listened attentively to their teachers and to one another. They articulated their thoughts in response to their teachers' questions. There was some potential for pupils to build on the contributions of their peers during discussions to further deepen their understanding. To further progress pupils' ability to describe their learning, teachers should place an increased emphasis on their ability to orally explain and discuss their choice of methods and answers when engaging in activities and tasks.
- Bhí caighdeán ard ag na daltaí sa Ghaeilge. Bhí dearcadh an-dearfach acu i leith na Gaeilge agus baintear úsáid as na habairtí agus na frásaí a múineadh dóibh go muiníneach. Bhí na daltaí in ann ceisteanna a chur agus iad a fhreagairt.  
*The pupils had a high standard in Irish. They had a very positive disposition towards Irish and confidently used the sentences and phrases they had been taught. The pupils could ask and answer questions.*
- In Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), it was evident that pupils were interested in and curious about the past and the world around them. Their learning experiences were of a high quality. Teachers successfully integrated pupils' learning across a range of curricular areas and pupils engaged in investigations and project work.
- Across the wider curriculum, pupils enthusiastically engaged with the Physical Education and Social Personal Health Education. They had very regular opportunities for creative expression through the Visual Arts, Drama and Music. During the focus group discussion, the pupils spoke very highly about their learning and described how their teachers tried to make learning fun.

### 2. The quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching was very good overall. Teachers presented well-prepared, structured and resourced lessons, regularly checking for understanding. In their survey responses, almost all parents reported that teaching was good and that their child was doing well in school.
- Where teaching was particularly successful, teachers made very good use of visual resources to deepen the pupils' understanding of vocabulary and to convey meaning. However in some lessons, there was a need to further provide for the full range of pupil abilities in classes. To build on the very good practice in the school, teachers should

continue to develop the use of visual resources to deepen understanding and convey meaning.

- At the time of the evaluation, teachers provided support for pupils with additional and special educational needs through withdrawal and in-class interventions in literacy, numeracy, social and motor skills. Lessons were delivered in a respectful and supportive atmosphere. In developing learning programmes, teachers were advised to ensure that pupils' learning targets in support plans were consistently specific and informed by a wider range of baseline and diagnostic assessment approaches.
- Overall assessment was of a good quality. At whole-school level, standardised tests were analysed and the results used to inform the provision of support for pupils with additional and special educational needs. Typically, teachers monitored pupils' attainment through classroom-based testing and teacher observation. There was a need for teachers to use assessment information more consistently to further inform differentiated teaching and learning approaches.

### **3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing**

- Very high quality support for pupils' wellbeing, represented a significant strength of the school's provision. Very respectful and encouraging interactions were observed between teachers and their pupils and pupils and their peers, which supported a welcoming, positive and inclusive learning environment. In their survey responses, all parents agreed that there was a good atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils participated in a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that supported a healthy lifestyle, a sense of self-worth and wellbeing. These included field trips, a diverse range of sporting activities, engagement with the Arts and various school committees. This helped pupils to feel safe, supported and connected to the school community. An active student council provided pupils with opportunities to contribute meaningfully to school life.
- The school worked very effectively to support home-school partnerships. It played an important role in the local community and parents were highly supportive of the work of the school. The parents' association provided valuable support to the school through fundraising and the organisation of events to enrich the lives of pupils in the school.

### **4. The quality of leadership and management**

- The quality of leadership and management was very good. The board of management discharged its duties effectively. Board members were very interested in pupils' learning outcomes and experiences.
- The principal demonstrated very effective leadership and management skills. She was highly committed to the school's ethos and had a clear vision for the school's continued development. The principal was very well supported by a dedicated and diligent deputy principal. Together with the school staff, they were strongly committed to enhancing the quality of care and educational provision for pupils.
- School leaders reported that they facilitated the placement of student teachers from initial teacher education programmes.

## **5. The quality of school self-evaluation**

- The quality of SSE was good. The school has engaged positively in the SSE process and agreed a comprehensive range of well-being related actions. The impact of these actions was evident throughout the school. To assist the school in implementing future cycles of SSE, greater specificity in target setting and further inclusion of parent and pupil participation, was advised.
- Collaboration was a significant strength of teachers' practice. Teachers participated in a very good range of professional learning opportunities which were suitably aligned with school priorities. In order to build on this good practice, it was advised that teachers record the target language in lessons in their individual recorded preparation and that they link this with classroom displays.

## 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
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> 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
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> 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
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> 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
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> 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