

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Wicklow Educate Together NS
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Hawkstown Road Wicklow Town A67 E371
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	20178G

**Date of inspection: 09-11-2017**



## **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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	09-11-2017
<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>• Meeting with teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</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

Wicklow Educate Together NS, under the Patronage of Educate Together, was established in 2003 and moved to its current premises in September 2016. The school has experienced a period of rapid growth and change; staff numbers have doubled in the last four years, with seven new appointments made this school year. There are 377 pupils enrolled currently across fourteen mainstream classes and three special classes for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is at a good standard; there is a wide range of pupil abilities and potential to enhance their achievement levels.
- The quality of teaching in mainstream and special educational needs settings is good overall, with a number of examples of highly effective practice; greater clarity and coherence of practice at whole-school and classroom levels is needed.
- There are some effective assessment practices in evidence across the school; there is a need to develop a whole-school approach to assessment to support the provision of richer learning experiences for pupils.
- Support for pupils' well-being is very good and the school is characterised by its warm, inclusive and welcoming environment.
- The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is very good; the principal's understanding of the needs of the school and her promotion of the skills of individual teachers and distributive leadership are highly commendable.
- The school has reported that, due to industrial action, it is not currently engaging in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process; agreed literacy and numeracy actions are evident in classrooms.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- To monitor and effectively respond to pupils' learning needs, a whole-school approach to assessment should be agreed and implemented systematically.
- To embed and develop a cohesive and progressive approach to practice, specific learning objectives, targets and programmes of learning should be identified and implemented at whole-school and classroom levels.

- To support the pupils' learning, skills development and their ability to make meaningful and authentic connections across the curriculum, an increased emphasis should be placed on the promotion of their active engagement levels and on their higher-order, independent and co-operative learning skills.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING**

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is of a good standard. The pupils demonstrate interest in their learning and generally have good engagement levels. There is a wide range of pupils' ability levels and potential to enhance their achievements. To support the pupils' learning, their skills development and ability to make meaningful and authentic connections across different areas of the curriculum, an increased emphasis should be placed on the promotion of their active engagement levels and on their higher-order, independent and co-operative learning skills.
- In English, a majority of pupils demonstrate good levels of confidence and competence in their reading and oral language abilities and experience a variety of writing genres across the school. Sa Ghaeilge, cé go glacann na daltaí páirt sna ceachtanna le suim agus tuiscint mhaith, tá gá a muintín agus a gcumas sa teanga a fhorbairt. Chun cabhrú le seo, moltar clár córasach uile scoile a chur i bhfeidhm. *In Irish, while the pupils participate in lessons with good levels of interest and understanding, it is necessary to develop their confidence and competence in the language. To assist with this, it is recommended that a whole-school incremental programme in Irish be implemented.*
- In Mathematics, pupils are making good progress and effective examples of their use of concrete resources to support their understanding and learning were evident.
- There are some effective assessment practices in evidence across the school. These include the provision of high-quality formative feedback to pupils on their work and examples of highly commendable assessment for learning practices. To monitor and effectively respond to pupils' learning needs, a whole-school approach to assessment should be agreed and implemented systematically.
- Lessons observed in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education and in Physical Education demonstrate that some valuable learning experiences are provided for pupils. Pupils also experience a varied programme in the Visual Arts which includes opportunities to explore the work of national and international artists.

### **2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING**

- The quality of teaching in mainstream and special educational needs settings is good overall, with a number of examples of highly effective practice. In these settings, there was clarity of the intended learning objectives, a very good balance between teacher and pupil input and the development of the pupils' co-operative learning skills through their engagement in meaningful activities pitched at suitably challenging levels. In addition, classroom environments were very supportive of teaching and learning. Staff demonstrate a commitment and openness to building collective expertise in the skills and approaches necessary to facilitate improved pupil learning. To embed and develop a cohesive and progressive approach to practice, specific learning objectives, targets and programmes of learning should be identified and implemented at whole-school and classroom levels.

- Successes of literacy teaching include early intervention strategies such as *Literacy Lift Off*, the promotion of *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, phonics teaching, guided reading and the use of graded reading materials, particularly in the junior classes. To build on this good work, there is a need to extend the breadth of literacy approaches to all classes and to embed the agreed whole-school approach to the development of the writing process across a range of writing genres.
- The teachers in support and special class settings provide individualised programmes based on the assessed needs of the pupils. Good practice was observed in direct teaching, group instruction and in-class support. Highly effective practice was observed in a number of settings. To facilitate the ongoing development of provision for pupils with special educational needs, an audit of the continuing professional development needs of staff should be undertaken. In addition, the formal implementation of a staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning at all class levels is advised.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good and the school is characterised by its warm, inclusive and welcoming environment. The school fosters pupils' holistic development through the provision of a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents indicated that they feel welcome and that the school helps their child's social and personal development. The parents' association and parents generally are very supportive of the work of the school and are involved in a broad range of meaningful activities.
- During the evaluation, interactions among pupils and between pupils and staff were respectful, positive and conducive to well-being. The embodiment of the school's motto 'Learn Together to Live Together', was apparent in the pupils' open-ended attitude to others, their acceptance of each other's individuality and the high levels of integration of pupils with an ASD. Initiatives such as the achievement book celebrate pupils' holistic successes and pupils' voice is promoted through activities such as the student council. Consideration should be given to a review of the results of the questionnaires which indicate significant levels of uncertainty in pupils' responses regarding their progress in learning.
- The attendance rate of pupils is generally good. In light of the significant number of pupils who miss more than twenty days, the school should continually review the effectiveness of its attendance-promotion strategies.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- The quality of leadership and management is very good. In recent years, the work of the board, principal and in-school management team has been focused on managing the transition to a new school building, the increase in pupil and staff numbers and the establishment of systems and practices to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Leadership and management at all levels acknowledge the need to refocus now on teaching and learning and the development of coherent and consistent whole-school approaches to the implementation of a spiral, progressive curriculum.

- The principal demonstrates strong leadership; she exhibits highly developed self-awareness, an understanding of the needs of the school and effectively distributes leadership to staff members with particular interests, expertise and strategic management capacities. She recognises the skills of individual teachers and parents and harnesses their expertise for the benefit of the school. The principal is ably assisted by an in-school management (ISM) team whose members fulfil a range of responsibilities conscientiously. The planned review of the responsibilities of the ISM team, with an increased emphasis on their curriculum leadership roles, is welcomed.

#### **5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The school reported that it is not currently engaged in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action. However, evidence available from the SSE work undertaken prior to the industrial action shows that the school has engaged in the SSE process. Targets in literacy and numeracy have been identified and there is evidence of agreed initiatives being implemented in classrooms. The outcomes of the SSE process have been communicated to the board of management and staff and should now be communicated to all parents annually.

## **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 Wicklow Educate Together National School welcomes the findings outlined in the Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

We are particularly pleased that the report recognises the high standard of support for our pupils' well-being as this has always been of paramount importance for us. We are also pleased that the welcoming and inclusive nature of the school is recognised and that the quality of our leadership and management is acknowledged. We take great pride in the acknowledgement that our pupils truly embody our "Learn Together to Live Together" motto in their attitude to and acceptance of each other's individuality and are also very happy at the recognition of the work of our Parents Association and parents generally.

### **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

Wicklow Educate Together National School is committed to consolidating and building on the findings in the whole school report. The recommendations included in this Inspection Report will be central to our school improvement work over the coming year and we have already developed a timetable and working action plan.

The Board is very pleased that the school and its staff are well placed to build collective expertise in the skills and approaches necessary to facilitate improved pupil learning.



## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;