



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Holy Family School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballymote Road Tubbercurry
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	20019J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	03/04/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	03/10/2025

# 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 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' 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 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.

## 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>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li><li>4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).</li><li>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 (revised 2023).</li><li>6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.</li><li>3. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment in line with their current policy.</li><li>4. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's current policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.</li></ol>

<p>information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, (revised 2023).</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> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</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>	01/04/2025-03/04/2025
<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

Holy Family National School is a co-educational primary school located in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Achonry. It had an administrative principal, eight mainstream class teachers, five special education teachers (SETs) based in the school, two of whom work on a jobshare basis. It also had the services of one part-time SET based in another school, a part-time home school community liaison co-ordinator based in a local post-primary school and four special needs assistants (SNAs). There were 196 pupils enrolled in the school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education's action plan for educational inclusion.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning was very good, with pupils demonstrating strong motivation and positive dispositions towards their learning.
- The overall quality of teaching was very good; teachers prepared very effectively for lessons.
- The school provided very high-quality support for pupils' wellbeing.
- The overall quality of leadership and management in the school was very good; a culture of improvement was fostered very effectively.
- The quality of school self-evaluation was very good.

### Recommendations

- Teachers should ensure that lessons provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, including more able pupils.
- Ba cheart do na múinteoirí an cur chuige cumarsáideach a chur i bhfeidhm go comhsheasmhach trasna na scoile, ar mhaithe leis an bhfoghlaím a dhaingniú agus dul chun cinn sa teanga a chothú.  
*Teachers should implement the communicative approach consistently in Irish across all classrooms to support consolidation and progression in the learning of the language.*

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good, with pupils demonstrating strong motivation and positive dispositions towards learning. They engaged confidently in a range of meaningful, well-structured activities, and were eager participants in both independent and collaborative tasks.
- Pupils in the focus group expressed very positive attitudes towards reading. In particular, they referenced independent reading time as an activity they enjoyed. A majority of pupils who participated in the survey stated that they enjoyed reading all of the time or most of the time. In junior classes, pupils were developing their phonological awareness systematically. Pupils were supported by a whole-school approach to handwriting and some excellent examples were observed throughout the school.
- In Mathematics, pupils were active in their learning, using concrete materials and connecting their learning to the real world. Pupils were observed to work very well together and used mathematical language effectively to explain their thinking. While teachers used a variety of tasks to engage all learners, at times there was scope to extend the learning of the most able pupils and provide more cognitively challenging activities for them.
- Léiríodh dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge i measc na ndaltaí. I roinnt de na ceachtanna a breathnaíodh, chan daltaí raon amhrán agus rann. Ar an iomlán, bhí sé ar chumas na ndaltaí labhairt fúthu féin. Mar sin féin, bhí gá le foghlaim a dhaingniú ar bhonn níos comhsheasmhaí agus béim a chur ar dhul chun cinn de réir mar a théann na daltaí ar aghaidh tríd an scoil. Ba cheart do na múinteoirí an cur chuige cumarsáideach a chur i bhfeidhm go comhsheasmhach trasna na scoile, ar mhaithe leis an bhfoghlaim a dhaingniú agus dul chun cinn sa teanga a chothú.
- *In Irish, pupils demonstrated positive attitudes towards the language. In some lessons observed, pupils recited a range of songs and rhymes. Generally, pupils were able to talk about themselves. However, there was a need to consolidate learning more consistently and to focus on progression as pupils progressed through the school. Teachers should implement the communicative approach consistently across classes to support consolidation and progression in consolidating learning and promoting progression in the learning of the language.*
- Pupils in senior classes were learning a third language through the Say Yes to Languages initiative.
- Pupils benefited from a wide range of outdoor and co-curricular learning opportunities that enhanced their experiences. These included library visits, nature walks, swimming lessons and participation in school choir and tin whistle instruction in some classes. Pupils enjoyed performing in dramatic productions and in the local nursing home.
- A wide range of visitors, including a poet, a mobile planetarium and a theatre group, provided supplementary learning experiences for pupils.

### 2. The quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching in the school was very good overall. Teachers created positive and inclusive learning environments that were highly supportive of pupils' learning. Classrooms were well organised and resourced, and the physical environment reflected the breadth of the curriculum, with stimulating displays.
- Each classroom included a well-stocked classroom library offering a variety of texts. Pupils in the focus group spoke positively about their access to reading materials, and the school was actively working to develop its library.
- A systematic and coherent approach to reading was observed across the school. Interventions such as Reading Recovery and Accelerated Reading were supporting

positive learning outcomes. In Mathematics, structured programmes including Ready, Set, Go Maths, and Maths Recovery helped scaffold early mathematical understanding through active learning strategies.

- Teacher prepared very effectively for teaching and learning. Examples of highly effective reflective practice were noted in some of the recorded planning. Whole-school approaches were evident in a range of areas including the writing genres, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). The school was developing a Physical Education (PE) plan to support further curricular progression.
- Teachers planned lessons that were well structured and focused. Where teaching was most effective, learning outcomes were clearly communicated, and tasks were designed to support pupils' understanding of targeted concepts and knowledge. In some instances, however, there was a greater need to ensure that lessons supported progression towards the intended learning targets.
- Teachers made effective use of various assessment approaches across the school, including summative and formative assessment. Very effective pupil-led assessment was noted in some settings, and there was scope to develop this practice across the school.
- The quality of teaching for pupils with identified needs was highly commendable. A wide range of diagnostic, screening, and formative tools were used to inform planning and respond to pupils' individual needs. SETs conducted assessments prior to and following interventions in literacy and numeracy. The Continuum of Support was used effectively and there was effective provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).
- Teaching staff demonstrated a high level of motivation and professional commitment. There was strong evidence of collaboration and shared practice.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was very good. Respectful, caring relationships were observed across all settings, and interactions between pupils and staff were consistently positive. There was clear evidence of a school-wide culture of inclusion and respect.
- The physical environment of the school supported pupils' wellbeing. Corridors featured bright, attractive displays that celebrated pupils' work and contributed to a welcoming and affirming atmosphere. There was scope to further enhance the environment to reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the school community.
- The outdoor environment was child-friendly and engaging, with a variety of games and equipment available in the yard and ample space for play and social interaction. The implementation of staggered break times ensured pupils had access to these outdoor spaces in a safe and enjoyable way.
- The school had engaged in a range of initiatives to promote wellbeing at both the whole-school and individual level. Staff had undertaken training in mindfulness, and the school had benefited from sustained support from the support services in Restorative Practice, which was positively impacting on relationships and behaviour. The school received both the Health Promoting Schools Flag and the Amber Flag for Wellbeing.
- Highly effective systems were in place to support transitions, as pupils moved from pre-school to primary, and from primary to post-primary school.

## 4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management in the school was very good. The board of management met regularly, fulfilled its statutory responsibilities and contributed meaningfully to the governance of the school. The principal, along with the board, oversaw a range of improvements in recent years to the school environment. The school building and grounds were maintained to a very high standard. At the time of the evaluation, the school was also engaged in the planning process for new building works.
- The principal demonstrated exemplary practice in fostering a culture of improvement and developing leadership capacity. Staff participated regularly in professional learning opportunities that were relevant and purposeful. New learning was shared collaboratively and staff were reflective and open to development.
- The in-school leadership team had a range of relevant roles and responsibilities. They met regularly to decide their plans and targets and had committed to reporting on their duties to the board of management. Along with the principal, they ensured the provision of high-quality resources to support teaching and learning, including digital technologies, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) resources, literacy resources, mathematical equipment and sports equipment.
- Almost all parents who completed the survey agreed that the school was well run, that there was a good atmosphere in the school and that they felt welcome in the school.
- The school had put in place very good tools of communication with parents and the wider community, including an excellent school website, school newsletters and a social media page. The website was regularly updated with school news, policies and learning activities. An in-built translation tool provided accessibility for parents and community members with diverse home languages.
- The school demonstrated a strong commitment to parental engagement. The school organised internet safety classes for parents, held open evenings for parents of infant pupils and had arranged for English language lessons in the past.
- The student council provided pupils with an opportunity to take on leadership and organisational roles within the school.

## 5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) was very good. The school's DEIS plan was highly targeted and reviewed regularly. There was a clear focus on addressing specific areas of need and continuously improving school provision. SSE activities were evidence-based, with data used very effectively to inform decision making and track progress. The impact of the process was evident in classroom practice and pupils' experience.
- There was clear evidence of parental engagement in the process. Parents, as well as pupils, have been regularly consulted through surveys on a range of areas. There is potential, however, to communicate the targeted areas for improvement with parents more clearly.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**



## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The BOM of Holy Family NS welcomes the positive and affirming findings of the Whole School Evaluation carried out in April 2025. We are delighted with the many positive observations highlighted in the report regarding teaching and learning in our school. We are happy to note the positive attitudes towards Reading and Gaeilge by pupils in our school. This reflects positively on the collaboration and commitment of staff towards SSE. We appreciate that the work undertaken to resource classrooms and to improve the school environment has been noted.

The feedback provided has been greatly valued, and we look forward to putting the report's recommendations into practice.

## **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 and staff of Holy Family NS welcomes the constructive recommendations as outlined in the report.

The staff are committed to collaborate planning to enable more challenging activities for our more able students, to further benefit their engagement in learning. The engagement and implementation of our new curriculum will provide us with opportunities for this.

Tá sé mar aidhm, ag foireann na scoile, feabhas a chur ar an teanga labhartha trí úsáid a bhaint as na feidhmeanna teanga chun dul chun cinn na teanga a chothú, foghlaim na Gaeilge a dhaingniú agus í a bheith mar theanga lárnach chumarsáide na scoile.

## 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