



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

REPORT

Aim na social/School name	Soil Naisiúnta Gort na hUaighe
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Gortnahoe Thurles Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	17580P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	13/02/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	09/05/2025

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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">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 (revised 2023).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).	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.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.3. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment in line with their current policy.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.

<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, (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.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	10/02/2025 – 13/02/2025
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with special education teachers• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with a parent representative• Meetings with teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Scoil Naisiúnta Gort na hUaighe is a rural, co-educational school in Co. Tipperary with an enrolment of 143 pupils. It operates under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. The staff comprised six mainstream class teachers and an administrative principal. There were two teachers assigned to special classes for pupils with autism and two special education teachers. A third special education teacher had a part-time allocation to the school. Six special needs assistants provided valuable support for the pupils. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education for inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of learning outcomes was very good and the pupils enjoyed varied and engaging learning experiences across the curriculum.
- Teaching was very good, with excellent practice noted in some settings; teachers set high expectations for participation and perseverance in lessons and learning.
- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent.
- The quality of assessment was very good; teachers used a broad range of assessment approaches.
- The school benefitted from excellent leadership and management; the principal was highly effective in his role as leader of teaching and learning.
- The quality of whole-school planning, including planning for DEIS, was very good.

Recommendations

- Chun an caighdeán a ardú a thuilleadh sa Ghaeilge, ba chóir deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltaí a stór focal nua a úsáid agus topaicí a bhfuil spéis acu iontu féin a phlé ar bhonn rialta. *To further improve the standard in Irish, pupils should be systematically facilitated to use their acquired vocabulary to discuss topics of interest to them.*
- While the quality of provision in support settings was very good, special education teachers should ensure that targets in Student Support Plans are consistently specific and quantifiable.

- Increased priority should be attached to the DEIS plan; it should be used by teachers to inform their recorded preparation, be central to staff meeting discussions and guide the uptake of professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- While attendance levels were generally good, the attendance of a cohort of pupils was a cause for concern. Renewed effort and collective responsibility are needed to promote the value of attendance so that pupils can benefit from the high-quality teaching and productive learning experiences available in the school.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The overall quality of learning outcomes was very good. Infant pupils demonstrated very good ability to play with, recognise and manipulate sounds such as syllables, onset-rime and phonemes in spoken words. Almost all pupils throughout the school could decode securely while reading at an appropriate instructional level. A school-wide culture of reading was actively promoted and supported by pupils' access to an extensive library. Pupils wrote confidently across a range of genres and their work was presented to a high quality. They knew the success criteria for written work and were guided in some classes by checklists and rubrics for self-assessment. To further improve the quality of their written work, it is advised that free writing be introduced in infant classes accompanied by a reduced emphasis on workbooks. *Bhí foclóir leathan ag na daltaí sna bun ranganna agus bhain siad an taitneamh as an réimse leathan de rannta agus amhráin a bhí acu. Labhair na daltaí sna hardranganna go muiníneach fúthú féin agus faoi roinnt ábhair eile. Scríobh siad go compordach san aimsir chaite agus chan siad amhráin go briomhar. Chun an caighdeán a ardú a thuilleadh, ba chóir deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltaí a stór focal nua a úsáid agus topaicí a bhfuil spéis acu iontu féin a phlé ar bhonn rialta. Pupils in junior classes had a wide vocabulary and they enjoyed performing their range of rhymes and songs. Senior pupils spoke confidently about themselves and other topics. These pupils wrote comfortably in the past tense and they enjoyed song-singing. To further improve the standard, pupils should be systematically facilitated to use their acquired vocabulary to discuss topics of interest to them.*
- In Mathematics, pupils demonstrated notable achievement and an analysis of standardised testing showed that most are making good progress in their learning. Learning in Mathematics was active, very well integrated with other curricular areas and linked to pupils' immediate environment. Through playful and engaging learning experiences, infant pupils were developing an awareness of the attributes of length. They successfully used a range of counting strategies. Senior pupils demonstrated good procedural fluency. They used a variety of concrete materials to deepen their understanding of fractions and their learning about weight was successfully aligned to fractions, decimals and percentages. Learning and use of mathematical language was consistently emphasised and successfully supported through classroom displays.
- Junior pupils enjoyed opportunities to co-operate and communicate in making Drama. Learning in Science in senior classes was closely related to pupils' lives and these pupils demonstrated excitement in making simple electrical circuits.
- High quality, productive and engaging learning experiences were provided for pupils. They enjoyed variety in their classroom activities where videos and digital technologies were used to extend learning. Creative and artistic development was successfully nurtured through opportunities to create art using a range of media. Partnership with local artists encouraged artistic exploration and collaboration in making Art. Pupils were observed to persist in independent tasks and to co-operate in paired and group activities, evidenced in a senior class lesson on a problem-solving task. The school had collaborated with both a local secondary school and a third level institution on coding and sustainable development projects.

- The pupils who participated in the focus group spoke positively about their experience as learners. They reported on a broad range of available co-curricular activities. They expressed enthusiasm for frequent visitors to the school who enriched their learning experiences in local history and helped them to get better at sports. Senior pupils reported that they liked reading with junior pupils. They described the school's digital assessment portfolios, reporting that they could look back on their achievements and see progress in their learning.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching was very good with excellent practice noted in some settings. Teachers prepared very well for lessons and their recorded preparation was used productively to guide provision in classrooms. They displayed pupils' written work, which included poetry composition and writing in a range of genres in classrooms. All teachers set high expectations for engagement and persistence in learning. Lesson content was appropriately challenging, and pupils' ideas were incorporated into activities. Learning was connected to the pupils' immediate environment and to their interests.
- High levels of collaboration existed between mainstream and special education teachers. The special education team was responsive to emerging literacy, numeracy and emotional needs, through fluid, flexible timetabling. Positive relationships were established with pupils and productive use was made of games to promote engagement and to practise skills in literacy and numeracy. When developing student support plans, teachers should establish a clear baseline of pupils' attainment in the areas being supported. Improvement targets should be consistently specific and measurable and pupils' progress should be periodically monitored and recorded.
- The quality of teaching in the recently established special classes for pupils with autism, was very good. The domains of the Good Practice Autism Guide were evidenced in teachers recorded preparation. Lesson content reflected pupils' areas of interest and built on their existing strengths. The approaches used included visual schedules and social stories to support learning and social skills development.
- The quality of assessment was very good overall. Teachers used a range of approaches including checklists, questioning and summative testing. Copybooks were well monitored and some formative feedback was provided to support pupils' awareness of their progress. It is advised that the school implements whole-school practice on the provision of formative feedback to pupils. This practice would further promote positive self-esteem, motivate learning and encourage pupils to reflect on their progress.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was excellent. Management, teachers, parent representatives and ancillary staff were deeply committed to pupils' wellbeing so that they could thrive and grow as learners. Whole-school planning for wellbeing documented actions to foster a positive and supportive learning environment. The plan outlined the ambition to build resilience and to cultivate a sense of wellbeing for pupils.
- The Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum was taught consistently and all teachers followed comprehensive school plans to guide its provision. The school actively engaged with parents on children's overuse of technologies. They shared the alternative benefits of activity and its positive impact on pupils' readiness to learn. Beneficial links had been established with local early years settings and post-primary schools to ensure smooth transitions for pupils.

- Pupil voice was facilitated in a meaningful manner through their participation on a range of forums including the Amber, Active and Green Schools committees. Their achievement was celebrated consistently through attractive displays, commendation at assembly and on the school's website. Teachers held morning meetings with pupils at the start of each day to ensure that pupils were content and ready for learning.
- There was a strong emphasis on physical movement and outdoor play and the whole school engaged collectively on a weekly basis in fundamental movement exercises.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was excellent. The board of management had been active in recent years in guiding significant improvement to the physical learning environment. The board supported the addition of two special classes and continued to review and expand school policy in a range of organisational areas. Representatives of the board who met with inspectors as part of the evaluation were extremely proud of the school's development in recent years.
- The principal provided exceptional leadership for the school. He had successfully fostered a very positive school culture that supported learning and teaching and had been purposeful and strategic in leading progression and improvement across all aspects of the life of the school. He held high expectations for pupil achievement and was deeply committed to providing productive learning experiences for them.
- The deputy principal and in-school leadership team afforded him very strong support and together they facilitated teachers to share, discuss and demonstrate practices that have proven successful at improving learning outcomes. This team showed great commitment to the continued development of practice in teaching.
- A representative of the parents' association met with inspectors and shared the associations' role in the life of the school and its specific involvement in initiatives such as reading with junior pupils. The representative emphasised the schools' inclusive and welcoming environment.
- The school regularly provided placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcomed and is included among the standards of the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and teacher education institutions.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning was very good. Organisational policies were systematically and collaboratively reviewed. Curricular policies had also been revised to promote consistency in whole-school approaches to teaching and to guide provision of learning experiences. A new digital plan was recently put in place to help pupils become better digital learners and boost their confidence in using technology for creative thinking and expression.
- A DEIS plan had been developed across the seven themes of this initiative. School leadership reported that the plan was regularly reviewed and that progress on targets was consistently monitored. There is a need to attach increased priority to the DEIS plan. It should be used by teachers to support their recorded preparation, be central to staff meeting discussions and guide the uptake of professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- While attendance levels were generally good, the attendance of a cohort of pupils was a cause for concern. Renewed effort and collective responsibility are needed to promote

the value of attendance, so that pupils can benefit from the high-quality teaching and productive learning experiences available in the school.

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
Excellent	Provision that is excellent 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
Very good	Provision that is very good 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
Good	Provision that is good 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
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard 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
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard 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