



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Rath Mixed N S
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Rath Ballybrittas Portlaoise
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	13741Q
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	11/02/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	06/05/2026

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 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"> 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. 2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment. 3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern. 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. 5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 pupil friendly version that is displayed where pupils and the school community can see it. 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. 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. 4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment. 5. All staff visited report that they have read the school's Bí Cineálta policy and that they are aware of their roles and

<p>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> <p>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</p>	<p>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.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	04/02/2026 – 06/02/2026
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meetings with teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher 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

Rath Mixed NS is a rural co-educational primary school that caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It is located in Ballybrittas, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. It has an administrative principal, eight mainstream class teachers, four special education teachers, and one teacher of English as an additional language who is shared with another school. The school has two teachers for two classes for pupils with autism. There were 196 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Pupils' learning was good. Pupils presented as motivated learners.
- The quality of teaching was commendable. Teachers prepared effectively for lessons and created inclusive and purposeful learning environments.
- The quality of support of pupils' wellbeing was very good.
- The leadership and management of the school was effective. School leadership and the board of management meaningfully collaborated to create and maintain a positive learning environment.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) undertaken was good.

Recommendations

- Is gá do mhúinteoirí scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt ar bhonn níos córasaí agus de réir thorthaí foghlama churaclam na bunscoile. B'fhiú saol agus suimeanna na ndaltaí a úsáid mar bhunchloch na fhoghlama seo. *Teachers should develop pupils' communication skills in a more structured way in line with the curriculum. It would be worthwhile to use the lives and interests of pupils to develop their language skills.*
- Teachers should strengthen and extend pupils' opportunities to engage in deeper and sustained learning experiences across the curriculum.
- Leaders and teachers collected evidenced-based data at whole-school, whole-class and individual pupil level. The use of this data to inform interventions was an area for further development. Leaders and teachers should ensure that pupils' learning targets and subsequent interventions for pupils with identified needs are further informed by assessment data and pupils' identified priority learning needs.

- Leaders and teachers should develop and strengthen oversight of the use of the school plan to identify and support curriculum enactment on a developmental basis.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

- The quality of pupils' learning was good. Pupils presented as motivated learners and they demonstrated competence when sharing their learning overall. They had positive learning experiences where they engaged with a range of curriculum areas through meaningful learning activities.
- In English, pupils' early literacy skills were systematically developed. Their oral language skills were competent overall, and they read with fluency at their own instructional level. Pupils capably wrote in a variety of genres and described the features of poetry. There was variance in pupils' outcomes in handwriting and presentation overall. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) demonstrated highly commendable progress in their social language and core literacy skills.
- Léirigh na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Bhí raon rainn agus amhráin acu. Chun cur le seo, is gá do mhúinteoirí scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt ar bhonn níos córasaí agus de réir thorthaí foghlama churaclam na bunscoile. B'fhiú saol agus suimeanna na ndaltaí a úsáid mar bhunchloch na fhoghlama seo. *The pupils displayed a positive attitude towards Irish. They had a range of poems and songs. To build on this, teachers should develop pupils' communication skills in a more structured way in line with the curriculum. It would be worthwhile to use the lives and interests of pupils to develop their language skills.*
- In numeracy, pupils demonstrated competence in operations and early mathematical skills. They made connections between their learning and real-life situations and presented their learning in a variety of ways. Overall, there was scope for teachers to provide greater challenge for higher achievers.
- Pupils engaged in worthwhile project work in Social, Environment and Scientific Education (SESE). While pupils had opportunities to develop their investigative and research skills. Overall, there was a need for pupils to have further opportunities to record their learning, in particular in relation to key disciplinary vocabulary and underlying scientific concepts and how these link to their lives and locality.
- Pupils' recognised the importance of their learning in Social, Personal and Health Education. They valued the opportunities provided to them to make suggestions to improve school life. Most pupils surveyed agreed that they had learned about different kinds of bullying in school.
- Pupils' learning outcomes in Physical Education were developed through a variety of learning experiences including games, swimming, gymnastics and athletics. Pupils understood the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils used digital technologies for research, educational games and preparing presentations. In instances, pupils created multi-modal texts which were of a high standard. They had interesting opportunities to develop their computational thinking skills. Highly commendable practice was observed where pupils with identified learning needs used augmented and alternative communication methods, including digital technologies, to access and demonstrate their learning.
- In the Arts, pupils were provided with a range of opportunities to engage with musical instruments, singing and visual arts. Leaders and teachers should ensure that pupils' learning is meaningfully developed according to the expectations of the Drama curriculum in all classes.

2. The quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching was commendable. Teachers prepared engaging lessons across curricular areas. Pupils' work was celebrated in classrooms and in school corridors. Teachers used a range of resources and approaches, including individual, pair and group activities, station teaching, and digital devices, to enrich teaching and learning. There was scope to extend learning opportunities for pupils to optimise their knowledge and skill development. Teachers should strengthen and extend pupils' opportunities to engage in deeper and sustained learning experiences across the curriculum. Where integration is used, teachers should ensure a clear focus of learning in each curriculum area with ongoing assessment of outcomes achieved.
- Teachers demonstrated very good classroom management skills. They provided inclusive learning environments and adopted a pupil-centred approach to the learning needs of pupils overall. Respectful engagement was a strong feature of practice. There was a need to develop further collaboration between mainstream and special classes to ensure integration opportunities are maximised for learning.
- In the parent questionnaires conducted as part of the evaluation, almost all parents agreed that there was a good atmosphere and that teaching was good in the school.
- Special education teachers demonstrated a strong commitment to their roles. They consulted meaningfully with parents to create support plans. In instances, there was scope for learning targets to be more specific and aligned to pupils' prioritised learning needs to a greater extent.
- Assessment practices were effective and included teacher observation and questioning, tasks and standardised tests. In the main, pupils' written work was monitored frequently. While teachers maintained assessment records, scope existed for assessment to be extended across curricular areas. There was scope for teachers to enhance the provision of assessment approaches including developmental feedback and self- and peer-assessment to enable pupils to reflect on their learning.
- Leaders and teachers collected data at whole-school, whole-class and individual pupil level. The use of this data to inform interventions was an area for further development. Leaders and teachers should ensure that pupils' learning targets, and subsequent interventions for pupils with identified needs, are further informed by assessment data and identified priority learning needs.

3. The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing was very good. Pupils were offered a broad range of engaging activities, including physical exercise, gardening, cookery, and events such as Grandparents Day.
- Transitions to and from primary school were supported highly effectively by leaders and teachers. This aspect of practice was a significant strength in the school. Leaders and teachers are highly commended for the professional links fostered with local schools.
- Pupils reported that they enjoyed visits from the local community and organisations with a focus on cycling, social media and fire safety. This enriched pupils' learning experiences and fostered connections to real-life situations.
- The active student council was meaningfully involved in school life. It was highly commendable that student council members had attended a meeting with the board of management. Pupils in senior classes were provided with opportunities to mentor younger pupils which promoted positive relationships. In the pupil survey, almost all pupils agreed that their opinions were listened to in school. It was notable that the school and parents had collaborated highly effectively to establish a whole-school charter regarding pupils and mobile phones.

- Pupils in the focus group reported that they enjoyed opportunities to engage in co-curricular trips. They stated that they would welcome additional opportunities to further explore leadership roles regarding sports and arts committees.

4. The quality of leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management was effective. The board of management, principal, and school leaders created a supportive school environment and enriched school facilities including outdoor spaces and the school library. School leaders were ably supported by a committed board of management. Policies were developed collaboratively between the board, parents association and school staff. It was clear from this collaborative approach, as well as from feedback from parent representatives and parental surveys, that school leaders established positive relationships and fostered a spirit of collegiality.
- School leaders and teachers worked effectively to identify school development priorities. Further review of whole-school plans should provide additional guidance for teachers on the expectations of pupils' learning of local areas in SESE and guidance on the implementation of the Drama curriculum. To this end, leaders and teachers should develop and strengthen oversight of the use of the school plan to identify and support curriculum enactment on a developmental basis.
- It was noteworthy that school leaders and teachers undertook professional learning opportunities which enhanced teachers' collective practice.
- School leaders communicated effectively with parents through approaches including monthly newsletters and reports from board meetings. A meeting conducted with parent representatives, and data analysed from parental surveys, indicated that almost all parents agreed that the school was well run.
- The school regularly provided placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

5. The quality of school self-evaluation

- The quality of SSE was good. School leaders effectively consulted with pupils, parents and staff to identify priorities for school development. They analysed evidence gathered and identified areas for development. Where meaningful self-improvement targets were set, they clearly defined the required actions and responsibilities. There was scope to further enhance targets overall based on data collected. This should be supported by more regular formal review to monitor impact and refine actions. This has the potential to further enrich school development and curriculum delivery.

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