

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Red Door School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Monkstown Grove Monkstown Avenue Monkstown Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20381D

Date of Evaluation: 03-02-2017



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils' wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

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.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	30 and 31 January 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with acting principal / teacher• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representative• Meetings with behaviour analyst and other staff members• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to acting principal / teacher, behaviour analyst other staff members, parent and board of management representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Red Door School is a co-educational special school operating under the patronage of Autism Ireland. The school provides for children with a primary diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and complex needs. Currently the Red Door School caters for 11 pupils from five to nine years of age. There have been significant difficulties over the years in retaining a school principal and teaching staff. At the time of the evaluation, staff comprised one class teacher also working as acting principal, one behaviour analyst and ten special needs assistants (SNAs). The school is accommodated in a number of pre-fabricated temporary buildings. In 2011 the school was granted temporary recognition by the Department of Education and Skills and is now seeking permanent recognition.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The future development of the school is proactively supported by the recently constituted and dedicated board of management.
- The acting principal, behaviour analyst and school staff team demonstrate a highly commendable level of commitment to the care and management of the pupils.
- Classroom settings provide for pupils' learning mainly on an individualised basis, with some provision for group activities.
- In-school management processes have not developed adequately as a consequence of numerous changes of principal and teaching staff since 2011.
- Some useful policy and planning work has been undertaken in the organisational and curriculum areas despite limited continuity of teaching staff.
- While much good practice was observed in classrooms, overall a limited range of teaching methodologies was employed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Within the context of a whole-school collaborative process it is essential that the school's policy development in curriculum and organisational areas is progressed as a matter of priority.
- The use of a broader range of teaching approaches appropriate to the changing needs of the pupils and their learning objectives is required.

- Pupils should be provided with opportunities to engage purposefully in a greater variety of learning across the curriculum areas; where appropriate these should be linked to the practical application of skills in the environment.
- To extend pupils' social and communication skills and taking account of their individual needs, further opportunities to undertake pair and group activities should be facilitated in structured and unstructured contexts.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- Good achievement in pupils' learning is in evidence. Pupils are enabled to acquire appropriate behaviours facilitating their participation in learning activities, and overall, pupils displayed enjoyment and participated well in lessons. Almost all parents responded in questionnaire returns that their child enjoys school. Linkages between learning in school and learning at home are successfully promoted through the use of a very useful home school diary. There is a consistent emphasis on functional communication and pupils develop beneficial skills to communicate their needs. Opportunities to interact with peers in structured and unstructured contexts should be extended further. Staff demonstrate good awareness of the need to broaden the curriculum available to pupils, and the recent introduction of cookery for pupils and the widening of the physical education programme for pupils are welcome. To extend pupils' access to a broader curriculum, a wider range of activities should be planned and developed, including opportunities for pupils to engage purposefully in a greater variety of learning areas and the application of skills in purposeful real-life activities.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- While much good quality teaching was observed during the evaluation, there is need to broaden the range of methodologies in use to meet the changing needs of the pupils. In each classroom setting, visual timetables and schedules indicate clearly that the sequence of activities for individual pupils and transitions are skilfully managed. Lesson activities are carefully planned and well structured. There is a high quality co-operation in each classroom in relation to the management, care and support of the pupils. Pupils' learning needs are identified, addressed and monitored through well-planned individualised education programmes. Classroom settings support pupils' learning mainly on an individualised basis, with some provision for group activities. Wider opportunities for pupils to access learning activities while working in pairs and groups should be developed in a variety of settings. To assist staff in broadening the curriculum provided to pupils and to widen the range of approaches used in classrooms the professional development programme in place at the school should be extended to include specific inputs on the primary school curriculum, teaching methodologies and autism specific approaches.

3. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- There is very good support for pupils' well-being in the school. The school environment is welcoming, well-managed and supportive. In the questionnaire responses almost all parents agree that the school helps their child with social and personal development and that their child feels safe and well looked after in the school. The strong awareness of the needs of the pupils arising from ASD informs the excellent practice in the management of behaviour. The behaviour analyst leads the process of devising comprehensive behaviour management plans

for pupils and these are implemented in a consistent manner. In the questionnaires almost all parents responded that the school manages children with challenging behaviour well. Good use is made of local community settings and facilities and the school has established some early links with a local primary school. Opportunities for pupils to experience inclusive learning opportunities should, where feasible, be further developed through establishing links with local schools and other organisations. There is regular and on-going communication between home and school and parents have ready access to staff in relation to issues and concerns.

- 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. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The future development of the school is proactively supported by the recently constituted and dedicated board of management. The board meets regularly in attending to the business of the school. A broad range of issues is discussed including recruitment, finance, school policies and the ongoing development of the school. The open style of leadership of the acting principal and senior staff facilitates communication and effective collaboration among staff members. The acting principal and behaviour analyst successfully lead and support the creation of an inclusive and responsive school climate for pupils, parents and staff. In-school management processes have not developed adequately as a consequence of numerous changes of principal and teaching staff since 2011. Some useful policy and planning work has been undertaken in the organisational and curriculum areas despite limited continuity of principal and teaching staff. Within the context of a whole-school collaborative process it will be essential that the school's curriculum and organisational policy development is progressed as a matter of priority.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- As a consequence of the numerous changes in principal and teaching staff over the years staff and school management have not yet engaged in the school self-evaluation process. Within the context of a whole-school collaborative planning process it will be important that the school begins its engagement with school self-evaluation.

Conclusion

- There is evidence that school management is highly committed to the ongoing development of the school. This school's capacity to engage in school improvement and develop further is currently very good.

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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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
Good	Good 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
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. 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
Fair	Fair 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
Weak	Weak 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;