



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Ainm na scoile/School name	Nenagh College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Dromin Road Nenagh Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	72440K
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	17/10/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	13/01/2025

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# 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. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

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></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 students.</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>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, 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>	10/10/24 – 17/10/2024
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with board of management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li><li>• Meetings with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with parents</li><li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers</li></ul>

## School context

Nenagh College is a co-educational, multi-denominational post-primary school, under the patronage of the Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB). The school had 368 post-primary students enrolled at the time of the evaluation. The school offers the Junior Cycle, Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, and all other senior cycle programmes. The school also provides Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, which were not evaluated during the WSE-MLL. Part of the school's supports are two special classes for students with autism.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- A broad range of subjects and programmes was provided to meet the needs of all learners in a very well-maintained learning environment offering a wide range of facilities.
- Very good progress has been achieved in developing a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) culture and in engaging with digital technology to support teaching, learning and administration.
- Approximately half of the lessons observed were of very good quality; the other half were good or required improvement to reach a good standard.
- The overall quality of leadership and management was good, with some key areas requiring improvement.
- Some progress has been made in developing the school's supports for students with additional educational needs (AEN).
- The school is very well supported by TETB. Ongoing support to help the school address teacher deployment and curriculum planning in a challenging enrolment context is needed.
- The overall quality of support for students' wellbeing was good. Student wellbeing was central to the mission and vision of the school.

### Recommendations

- A cross-disciplinary team of teachers should be established and provided with ongoing time to work with all staff, to share effective practices in teaching, learning, assessment and subject planning, so that the very good practices seen in some lessons can be achieved consistently.
- Some of the AEN hours were not being used for their intended purposes and a significant proportion of the hours were yet to be allocated at the time of the evaluation. The TETB, in conjunction with the senior management team and the board, should

oversee a strategic review of the provision and the deployment of teachers to ensure that the entire additional teacher allocation provided to the school to support students is utilised effectively.

- Practice across the school needs to be improved so that the provision of support to students with AEN is guided by the continuum of support framework and problem-solving process, student support plans for all students on the continuum, and understanding of the relevant best practice guidance documents and circulars.
- A significant proportion of whole-school meeting time is used for information inputs. Communication in the school would be enhanced by the incorporation of well-planned collaborative working opportunities during staff meetings and Croke Park meetings and an SSE action planning for improvement approach to the preparation and running of staff meetings.
- Appropriate training should be undertaken to operate a Student Support Team and formal wellbeing promotion review and development cycle should be undertaken, guided by the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

Approximately half of the lessons observed were of very good quality; the other half were good or required improvement to reach a good standard.

### 1. The quality of teaching and learning

#### Learner outcomes and experiences

Respectful student-teacher relationships were noted in lessons and teachers generally fostered positive classroom atmospheres.

Where the learner experience was most effective, a variety of methodologies was used to activate students' engagement and enjoyment. Students in the focus group spoke of how methodologies such as hands-on learning, project work, making learning a game through digital applications, and team teaching particularly supported their learning.

Well-planned collaborative learning tasks were integrated into effective lessons, in which students experienced a sense of making progress and wellbeing. High levels of motivation, enjoyment and interest were evident in those lessons.

Where the learner experience required improvement to reach a good standard, there was an over-reliance on teacher talk, questioning of individuals, and in-class writing, with no opportunities for collaborative working.

Learning intentions were communicated clearly to students at the outset of most lessons. In effective lessons, the learning intentions were structured with action verbs, communicating clearly what students should know, value or understand rather than a list of tasks or subject content. In highly effective lessons, the teachers revisited the intended learning at the end of the lesson to assess students' understanding fully.

Effective use of digital technology to support the student learning experience was observed in the majority of lessons observed during the evaluation. For example, in one lesson, the teacher annotated the question displayed and uploaded the completed work onto the shared online platform for students, facilitating students to revisit the learning at their own pace. Students in the focus group valued this use of digital technology, as it supported their learning and engagement beyond the classroom.

#### Teachers' individual and collective practice

Lessons were generally well prepared, underpinned by teacher specialist knowledge. The highly effective lessons were very well structured and paced. In other lessons, the pacing was slow, with little variety in methodology, resulting in students becoming passively disengaged.

Effective inclusive practices were noted in some lessons, including where the teacher had prepared bulleted, simplified notes on a key event, to support the range of learners in the group. The other main inclusive practices observed included teachers moving among students during task phases giving support and feedback and team teaching. Team teaching is most effective when it is co-planned in advance to address the AEN of students in the class.

Expertise in relation to specific instructional approaches for students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs to be developed across the school. Students who are withdrawn to receive support should be grouped according to similarity of identified learning need, so that those needs can be effectively supported and targeted by teachers, and thereby student learning optimised. Teachers with interest in the area of EAL support should be sought, so that training can be accessed by them and then provided to all staff and management in best practice for supporting students with EAL in support and mainstream contexts.

Information is provided to all teachers about the students who have additional learning needs by an electronic register, but greater collaboration between teachers with AEN expertise and with teachers in mainstream classes now needs to be developed. Whole-school professional learning inputs to staff are needed and this area should be linked with school self-evaluation (SSE) targets and actions.

The sharing of learning intentions, questioning, the sharing of success criteria, and the assignment of homework were observed in a number of lessons. Consideration should be given to the setting of differentiated tasks where appropriate, to provide appropriate challenge to the range of learners. Some written feedback for improvement was evident in students' copybooks but this practice needs to be extended. Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback is a key strategy for developing students' learning.

With regard to teachers' collective/collaborative practice, effective sharing of resources and methodologies was reported within departments. Teachers collaborate in subject department meetings, sharing plans and resources using the school's online platform and most share resources with students through that platform. The detailed template for departmental meetings that was being utilised in some departments supports very productive discussions on improving teaching and learning and should be adopted across the school.

A sample of subject and programme plans were reviewed during the evaluation. The quality of those plans ranged from very good to requiring improvement. To achieve more consistent high-quality practice in this area, senior management should ensure that specific time is allocated to subject and programme planning during the school year. Also, senior management should organise whole-school planning meetings, where principles of highly effective planning can be identified from a range of in-house plans across the subjects and programmes. In addition, a cross-disciplinary team of teachers should be formed and provided with ongoing time to work with all staff, to share effective practices in teaching, learning, assessment and subject planning, so that the very good practices seen in some lessons can be achieved consistently. This could be a key SSE action for the school.

## **2. Quality of school leadership and management**

The overall quality of leadership and management was good, with some key areas requiring improvement.

### **Leading learning and teaching**

TETB communities of practice have been a key support to the leadership of learning in the school and teachers engage in a variety of individual professional learning experiences, encouraged by the senior management team.

Careful consideration is devoted to planning the school timetable to serve both the post-primary and the PLC learners on campus, working within the constraints placed on teacher and facility availability by this context.

Continuing to broaden subject and programme options has been a key aspect of leadership of teaching and learning. Very positive feedback was gathered from students and parents about the breadth and balance of the junior and senior cycle subject and programme options

available. The subject sampling programme provided to first year students and open choice for senior cycle subjects are key strengths of the school's provision. The introduction of L2LPs in 2021 has been an additional improvement, supporting the needs of a small number of students.

The promotion of a STEM culture in the school has been a priority for senior management over the past ten years, Junior Cycle short courses in Digital Media Literacy and Coding and senior cycle Computer Science are embedded in the curriculum. There has been an ongoing programme of whole-staff professional learning using technology to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. Very good leadership has been shown by the co-ordinator and team guiding the school's digital learning plan.

There have been very good developments in relation to whole-school guidance planning. The referral system for students to meet with the guidance counsellor is good. Good progress has been made on the draft whole-school guidance plan. The development of a specific page on the school website for guidance and a focus on communicating key guidance-related events to parents and students through the school's social media channels is commended. The tracking of students' post-school destinations is also conducted and enables the school to identify and communicate successful progression by students into a variety of further and higher education and employment destinations.

Over the past three years, significant developments have been undertaken to improve support to students with AEN. Two special classes for students with autism have been set up, with student support plans in place for those students. Team teaching has been expanded as a mode of supporting students with learning needs. An AEN register has been developed and the school is engaged in a provision mapping project this year, as part of a TETB community of practice. These fundamental building blocks are in place. However, the overall provision of support for students with learning needs still requires improvement to achieve a good standard.

Some of the special education teaching (SET) allocation was not used for its intended purposes. A significant proportion of the SET hours were yet to be allocated at the time of the evaluation. The ETB, in conjunction with senior management and the board, should oversee a strategic review of the provision and the deployment of teachers to ensure that the entire additional teacher allocation provided to support students is utilised effectively. Whole-school understanding and practice also needs to be improved so that the provision of support to students with AEN is guided by the continuum of support framework and problem-solving process, student support plans for all students on the continuum of support, and understanding of the relevant best practice guidance documents and circulars.

To address these key deficiencies, the principal should establish a core teaching and planning team for AEN to implement a continuum of support framework and problem-solving process. Given that no student support plans have been developed for students in the mainstream school yet, this process should be undertaken in a phased manner, with some additional administration time allocated for the work. The school should create an overall provision plan detailing the deployment of AEN and EAL allocations as per Circular 14/2017. All teachers should have access to student support plans to facilitate purposeful inclusion of students in mainstream classes. Finally, the school should review and develop its practices in line with the "Indicators of Effective Practice" for *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools* and for the forthcoming *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes*.

### **Managing the organisation**

A new board had just been formed at the time of the evaluation. Board minutes reviewed from the previous board demonstrated oversight of key areas of school life. A regular cycle of school policy and development needs to be established. The new board also needs to develop more awareness of curriculum change and to engage in oversight of the deployment of resources to SEN and EAL. Inputs by staff members to develop the board's awareness of these areas of school life are suggested.

The school is very well supported by its patron. It was evident from past board minutes that TETB provides systematic support and oversight to the school, particularly in relation to finance, procurement, and internal controls. Ongoing support to help the school address teacher deployment and curriculum planning in a challenging enrolment context is needed.



A safe, healthy and purposeful learning environment was being provided. Routines regarding the management of student access to mobile phones and good supervision of students during the school day were noted during the evaluation. The school was very well-maintained and fire drills and health and safety management were attended to annually. A significant strength for the school was the rental income from after-school use of the school gym and sports facilities by external groups, which was being re-invested in school facilities.

Very good support was being provided to first year students in their transition to post-primary school, where the same year head supports them from their first visits to the school on STEM days through to the end of their first year. Also, a junior cycle wellbeing Lifeskills programme links TY volunteer peer mentors with first years. Very good co-operation between the first-year year head, guidance counsellor and other teachers enables this Lifeskills programme to operate.

Good communication between year heads and the senior management team about the needs of students and particular class groups takes place, with some follow-up actions documented. Initial preparations for the establishment of a Student Support Team had commenced at the time of the evaluation. This team will need appropriate training so that it can deal with complex student situations that go beyond the remit of year heads.

Communication is an area for development in the school. To date, the principal has timetabled a significant proportion of whole-school meeting time for information inputs. A key finding from the WSE-MLL surveys was that half the teachers who replied disagreed with the statement "The views of teachers are valued in decision-making processes in this school." A contributory factor to this situation could be the imposition of a new post of responsibility schedule in September 2024.

To improve the quality of communication in the school, teachers' collective practices need to be developed by planned collaborative working opportunities during staff meetings and Croke Park hour opportunities. For each school year, key priorities should be discussed and agreed by staff and management. Actions to achieve those goals should be planned, and progress toward those goals should be monitored mid-year and reviewed before the end of the year. This SSE approach of action planning for improvement needs to be transparent to all stakeholders. To enable this approach to succeed, the number of initiatives undertaken by the school in any one year needs to be reduced.

### **Leading school development**

The school's guiding vision is expressed as a shared commitment to the core ETB values of "Respect, Community, Equality, Care, and Excellence." Partnership with other schools and the community is a strength.

In 2023/24, an SSE team was established, as part of a TETB-supported working groups initiative. The team developed a school improvement plan with targets related to attendance and punctuality promotion, formative and summative assessment practices, the promotion of student wellbeing, and advancing student and teachers' use of digital technology to support learning. Next steps for the school's SSE process should include creating a teaching and learning team to lead change in pedagogical practices, facilitated by the SSE postholder. The school improvement plan should be reviewed and revised with key recommendations from this report in mind. Finally, national curricular and student management policy and procedure changes that all schools will have to work through this year should be addressed using the SSE process.

Parents who were interviewed stated that they were happy with the school's facilities, co-educational nature, and that they liked the fact that new initiatives are piloted before decisions impacting on all students are made. Approximately one quarter of the parents/guardians who were surveyed during the evaluation responded. Of those respondents, most agreed with statements that they feel welcome in the school, are happy with the school, feel that their child is safe and well looked after in the school, and that the school is well run. Areas for examination arising from surveys include "The school regularly seeks the views of parents on school matters." Also, parents interviewed suggested that the lack of information about which teacher is responsible for aspects of student support, including for students with AEN and EAL, could be addressed by the addition of more information on the school website.



### Developing leadership capacity

The senior management team develops future leaders among the staff. Different teachers are given opportunities to lead areas of school life. The preparation and delivery of professional learning presentations by teachers to their colleagues in the school is encouraged and happens regularly. Staff are also developing their own leadership capacity through personal professional learning.

Last year's themed working groups, part of a TETB initiative, were a good support to developing shared ownership and staff capacity. Teachers interviewed reported that they felt the groups were a successful way of progressing improvement in school life. A few of the working groups continue to meet this year but this is no longer a school-wide initiative. It is advised that working groups be re-established to address targets linked with the school improvement plan.

Students are provided with a wide range of opportunities for leadership through the Student Council, Big Brother Big Sister programme, Green Schools Team, and various school teams. The student council identifies officers for various aspects of school life, links with the student body to gather ideas for improvement, and its chair meets with the principal periodically to communicate those suggestions. To further support student participation work, please see the materials on the Hub na nÓg website, particularly the Lundy model.

The school reported that it regularly provides 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 as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, students and the teacher education institutions. A postholder supports the induction of student teachers and newly-qualified teachers through the Droichead process.

## 3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

The overall quality of support for students' wellbeing was good.

The school was compliant with the child protection and anti-bullying checks conducted as part of the evaluation. The school has an overall plan for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) including provision for the specific topics required and a programme of work for all year groups was provided. A very detailed draft RSE/SPHE policy has been prepared but needs to be ratified and made available to all stakeholders.

The school has commendably undertaken numerous actions to address school-based risk factors for students including supporting students in the transition to first year, supporting the link between physical activity and student wellbeing, attendance monitoring and promotion, and year heads proactively getting in contact with parents on issues arising. The school also plans to introduce a "check and connect programme" after the midterm. The training and operation of a Student Support Team is a key protective factor that the school now needs to act on.

While 400 hours of junior cycle wellbeing curricular provision are in place, three other developments are needed in this regard. First, the planned learning outcomes and methodologies for the timetabled Lifeskills class need to be documented using the Appendix I template that appears in the *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines* (revised 2021). Second, professional development needs to be provided for all teachers of SPHE so that they can teach the 2023 specification with appropriate knowledge and supports. Third, students with autism need to be provided with enhanced and differentiated learning in the areas of SPHE and RSE, as per page 10 of the *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Indicators of Effective Practice*.

Of the students who were surveyed during the evaluation, most agreed with statements that they "get on well with other students in this school," and that adults in the school treat them "fairly and respectfully." Areas for further examination arising from the survey include "I am comfortable talking to an adult in the school if I'm feeling worried, concerned or stressed" and "If someone is bullying me, I feel comfortable getting help from a teacher or other adult in the school."

The school has a long history of organising events to support student wellbeing, including Mental Health Week, Wellbeing Month, Bystander Intervention Programme, Stand Up Week and co-curricular and extra-curricular trips, speakers and workshops. Commendably, the indoor space

displays the artistic accomplishments, as well as prose reports of their achievements in other disciplines, which is a very vibrant support to their wellbeing.

A formal school wellbeing team has been in operation since 2023. Last year's wellbeing working group gathered feedback from one student and one parent and also from a separate focus group of students on their experiences of the school's promotion of wellbeing. A number of wellbeing-related events were organised by the team.

A postholder has been appointed to lead the area of wellbeing since September 2024. The postholder will now need to work with a group of teachers representing key areas of wellbeing to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle, guided by the statements of effective practice set out in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

The Board appreciates and acknowledges the positive feedback regarding the broad curriculum, wide range of programmes available to students in Nenagh College. We are pleased to see recognition of the inclusion of STEM in the curriculum provision and the use of digital technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The Board acknowledges the positive affirmation of student wellbeing, which is central to the school's ethos, mission and vision. The board also acknowledges the progress the school has made in developing provision for students with Additional Educational Needs to date. This aspect will continue to be developed to meet the needs of the students. The board also acknowledges the support of TETB as the school patron and will endeavour to carry out the school mission and vision underpinned by our core values.

## **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 acknowledges all recommendations made in this report. These recommendations will form part of the board's focus in school development and school self-evaluation.

The school has established a teaching and learning team, sharing teaching methodologies observed in the WSE, as being excellent and of good practice, is to form part of their focus.

A student support team established prior to the inspection, has commenced training provided by NEPS. This team will add additional support to students and their wellbeing.

The board, in conjunction with the patron, will undertake a strategic review of the provision and deployment of teachers. The recently published circular 64/2024, together with the guidelines and indicators of good practice, will be used to inform this review and the school will seek to maintain current programmes and a broad curriculum for students. The school will continue to use provision mapping of school-based supports to students, as informed by the established communities of practice facilitated by the patron.

The school management provides collaboration and planning time in its schedule each year. The senior management will endeavour to incorporate further opportunities for collective and collaborative planning in its schedule each year.

As a newly formed Board of Management, in collaboration with the school patron, senior management & middle leadership teams, the board will seek to build on the work of the previous board, to continue the highly valued contribution Nenagh College provides to the communities it serves.

## 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