An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Clarin College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Newford, Athenry Co Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	71270G
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	11/02/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	20/05/2026

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. 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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>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 protection oversight report in line with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary</td><td>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 student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/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/students.
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 responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.</td></tr>
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schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 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. 7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE) 8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location	

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	10, 11 & 12 February 2026
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with principal and deputy principals • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus group meetings	• Meeting with parents • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Clarin College is a co-educational, post primary community college which operates under the auspices of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). It offers all available programmes, including Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes, and has three special classes to support students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The school plans to open a fourth special class for the start of the next academic year which has been sanctioned by the Department of Education and Youth. At the time of the inspection, 1144 students were enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good, with practices ranging from requiring improvement to a small number of excellent practices.
- Management and leadership of teaching and learning were good overall; some very good practices were noted for managing the organisation and leading school development.
- Some very good supports were in place for students in the special classes for students with autism, and for students requiring additional support in mainstream classes.
- The learning and working environments throughout the school were attractive and well maintained, and corridors were calm during all transition periods.
- Very good digital facilities were available to support communication, collaboration and learning; this was supported by a very capable digital technology co-ordinator and students who acted as digital ambassadors.
- Relationships were very good among students and staff, and all interactions observed were positive and respectful.
- Students had a broad range of extra-curricular activities available to them, which supported their academic and educational experiences as well as overall wellbeing.

Recommendations

- The six-step school self-evaluation (SSE) process to support school improvement should be used to identify areas in need of improvement, to streamline current teaching and learning initiatives, to evaluate effectiveness and to modify accordingly.
- Management needs to take a more active oversight role to manage and monitor the work of subject departments, with a focus on improving provision for students.

- Teachers and subject departments should improve planning practices to ensure that lessons are well differentiated, have clear learning intentions and that students have a broad range of purposeful learning experiences.
- The board and senior management should develop an approach to policy review and development which includes purposeful inputs from all stakeholders and supports the work of the school.
- Management should consider building on the school's very good relationships with parents by setting up a Parents' Association to support the work of the school and strengthen communication channels between parents and the school community.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of teaching and learning

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of learner outcomes and experiences was good, ranging from a small number of excellent practices and many instances where improvement was required.

Relationships with and among students were very positive and affirming. When given the opportunities in lessons, students were happy to offer suggestions and responses. They were also happy to work together, which was sometimes facilitated by the teacher and at other times happened naturally as they were working on individual tasks.

There were some lessons in which students spent the majority of the time listening to the teacher, watching the teacher doing examples or transcribing notes. While some students can learn from listening and reproducing examples, there are better ways to ensure that learning experiences are more purposeful and interesting for a broader cohort of learners. Well-differentiated lessons will ensure that every student experiences some challenge and success.

Classroom management practices varied. Where practice was most effective, room layouts ensured that students could work collaboratively and support each other. In these lessons, seating arrangements were inclusive and groups were arranged to ensure the best outcomes for everyone. There were many lessons where better seating plans and management of resources were required to support more inclusive learning experiences.

Learning environments were well decorated with sourced materials and displays of student work. In some lessons, classroom displays were used purposefully by the teacher and students to support learning. Communal areas were used well to showcase and celebrate a range of achievements and students' work.

Purposeful assessment is an area requiring improvement. There was minimal monitoring of students' work seen during the inspection. This had an impact on the way copybooks and work were presented and maintained. Formative written feedback should affirm what is being done well and guide improvement. The very good practice of giving formative feedback on tests should be extended to guide improvements to classwork and homework, and to affirm what is being done well.

The need to improve in-class assessment practices was noted where lessons progressed without due consideration of students' prior learning. There was scope to make better use of questioning to check learning during lessons. Where a broad range of questioning strategies was used effectively, teachers were fully aware of how much progress students were making and where they needed to provide additional support or modify methodologies. However, in the majority of lessons, questioning was undifferentiated and did not require higher-order thinking

from students.In many lessons, the teacher moved on even when few or none of the students had responded to questions asked.

In one example of excellent practice, students discussed ‘what went well’ and ‘even better if’ to assess each other’s work and take purposeful feedback from their peers. In this case, it was evident that the students were well prepared to use the strategy effectively, understood the value of it and had done it previously. Expectations for students were suitably high, and the development of skills to support lifelong learning was incorporated effectively into this lesson.

Teachers’ individual and collective practice

Teachers’ individual and collective practices were good overall.

Teachers were competent and confident subject experts who were enthusiastic about their areas of expertise. Where outcomes and experiences were best for students, it was clear that well-planned lessons were built around clear learning intentions and incorporated effective assessment of progress and understanding.

The quality of individual lesson planning varied overall. Planning should ensure that all students have purposeful engagement with lesson content in their lessons. They should have regular opportunities to work in pairs or groups on specifically planned tasks. Students’ prior learning should be identified and used as a basis for progressing the lesson. Regular opportunities to justify solutions or discuss findings should be a feature. This would provide students with opportunities to use the terminology of the subject in context andsupport each other’s progress, and allow teachers to see their levels of progress and understanding. These were features of the lessons that were planned effectively.

The quality of Transition Year (TY) provision varied from subject to subject. TY should offer an interesting and positive learning experience for students. Each subject and module should be a stand-alone learning experience that engages those who may have done the subject before and those who may never have experienced it. While much of the learning and skill development will help for the Leaving Certificate, it should not be planned as part of Leaving Certificate provision. There was some very good quality planning for some TY modules, with others requiring significant improvement. Oversight and guidance is required to ensure all subjects meet the high standards experienced by students in some subject areas.

In some of the lessons observed, a broad range of questioning strategies to assess, check, prompt, include and challenge was used effectively. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Focus on Learning* document is a recommended resource to help teachers, departments and schools improve their assessment strategies.

Digital technology was used well in the majority of lessons to support teaching. In a small number of lessons, there was scope for more effective use of digital technologies to provide interactive examples and visualsor for research purposes. There is considerable scope for the use of digital technologies to reduce the need for students to transcribe notes from the board. Setting tasks that require students to engage with notes shared digitally is a more effective way of supporting learning.

A strength of the school was that teachers had a broad level of knowledge around a wide variety of teaching approaches and initiatives. In some instances, such approaches and initiatives were employed very effectively to support students’ learning . In other lessons, however, the approaches and initiatives chosen used were not the most effective way of responding to the particular learning needs of the group or class.
Collaborative and collective planning required improvement. There was significant range in the quality of the subject and programme plans reviewed during the inspection. In a small number of plans, schemes of work were detailed andfocused on learning. However, the majority of plans examined were insufficiently cohesive or detailed to support individual lesson planning. Minutes of meetings, which for the most part were not stored in the plans, focused on administration tasks, some with very little detail. Subject department meetings should include action planning for making improvements to teaching methodologies, learning experiences and assessment strategies, and for sharing good practice and effective resources.

2. Quality of school leadership and management

Leading learning and teaching

Overall, the quality of leading learning and teaching was good.

The school offered all available programmes including Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes. Students had a broad choice of subjects, and timetabling facilitated students' choices where possible. Students were encouraged and supported to remain studying at the highest level for as long as possible and there was a robust system for changing levels.

To improve the leadership of teaching and learning, management needs to take a more active oversight role to manage and monitor the work of subject departments with a focus on improving provision for students. Existing very good and excellent practices, which are providing high quality learning experiences and outcomes for students, should be used to set standards and expectations. The school should engage with the support available from the GRETB to support improvements in teaching and learning.

A number of strategies and supports were in place to address behaviours of concern among students, and the school engaged with many outside agencies, where relevant. Team teaching was used in some lessons to provide an additional layer of support for students. Team teaching opportunities should be spread across a broad range of subject areas, and reflection and review should look at how the additional resource has benefited the students, particularly those with the greatest level of need.

Managing the organisation

The quality of managing the organisation was very good overall.

The support systems and relationships within the school community resulted in a very positive school culture. The principal, deputy principals and many teachers had a presence on the corridors during break times and used the time effectively to build relationships with the students. The well-established year-head system saw year heads staying with the same group of students from first year, where possible, and this helped with building positive and supportive relationships with students, parents and guardians. Each class group had a tutor who was timetabled to teach Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and, where possible, another subject. This was an effective way to help build relationships between students and their class tutors. The practice of naming the class group after the tutor ensured that everyone knew who the tutor was. It is recommended that clear role descriptors are developed for tutors and year heads to help avoid duplication of duties and to ensure that everyone is clear on what the roles involve.

Currently, the school has a Statement of Strategy but targets need further refinement. The school should establish clear, measurable and realistic targets that are directly aligned with identified priorities. Support and guidance available from the GRETB should be sought and welcomed to progress the school's improvement plan. While the school's Statement of Strategy has been in place since 2024, many of the targets have not been achieved or were not detailed enough for progress to be monitored and measured.

Students had a broad range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to choose from, suiting many areas of interest. The school displayed their Amber Flag, Green Flag and Gaelbhratach with pride in the communal area as well as showcasing various awards and successes of various students and teams.

It is commendable that the school engages with the providers of initial teacher education and welcomes Professional Masters of Education students for their placements. There was some scope to manage deployment more effectively to match the student teachers with established and experienced teachers who understood their role as mentors, and their responsibility for the students in the lessons they were timetabled for.

The school was successful with an application for a Sports Capital Grant and it is commendable that the school was aware of and availed of the opportunity. Project management for this award will fall to the senior management team, supported by the board. At the time of the inspection, the school was managing the addition of a modular building on the school grounds to provide additional space while also planning for a permanent extension.

The board and senior management should ensure that the integrity of the school year is maintained for students in all programmes offered by the school. The staggered start to the school year and work placements are areas that need careful management in this regard.

Leading school development

Leading school development was very good overall.

The school works hard to build positive and productive relationships with parents, guardians, local schools, businesses and industries in surrounding areas. The school's plan to return to in-person parent-teacher meetings is highly commended and will strengthen relationships between parents, the school and teachers. It is suggested that the school consider including students in these meetings, especially for senior cycle.

The school was in the process of reviewing the roles and responsibilities of post holders. The review should result in clear, concise and specific duties reflecting the needs of the school, bearing in mind that the main business of the school is teaching and learning. The review should ensure there is a fair allocation of duties and time. The board should support senior management in using the SSE process effectively to identify the needs of the school and to support with organisation and oversight.

Very good digital facilities, including shared platforms, were available throughout the school to support planning, teaching and learning, communication and sharing of materials and resources. The school was in the process of transitioning to a shared platform that pre-populates the schemes of work from relevant syllabi and specifications. This will be a very helpful resource to support teachers with their lesson planning. As part of this process, it will be important that planning is also informed by the identified needs of students and by relevant assessment data, ensuring that teaching approaches are appropriately responsive and targeted.

The board and senior management should develop a system for policy review and development which includes inputs from all stakeholders and supports the work of the school. Priority should be given to developing a Whole School Guidance Plan, which has been in draft form for a number of years and does not reflect current provision.

Clarin College was found to be a very inclusive school where everyone is welcome. Three special classes in the Willow Wing support students with ASD. A fourth special class will open at the start of the new school year. Every effort was made to facilitate the inclusion of special-class students in mainstream settings, where appropriate, and some very good examples of this were observed. For students requiring additional support, teachers had easy access to information about their strengths, interests, obstacles to learning and targets. Mainstream teachers should plan for effective differentiation and inclusive learning experiences for all. There was scope to strengthen the systems to support transition into first year for students requiring additional support and to incorporate regular check-ins with these students and their parents and guardians, to monitor the effectiveness of support strategies and make changes where relevant.

Developing leadership capacity

The quality of developing leadership capacity was good overall.

Teachers and students were well supported to engage with extra-curricular and co-curricular events. Teacher professional learning was well supported and it is commendable that two teachers are currently training as guidance counsellors.

Clarin College would greatly benefit from having a parents' association to support the work of the school. It was reported that continued efforts to establish a parents' association were unsuccessful. However, a group of passionate and committed parents attended a meeting with inspectors during the evaluation and the school is advised to harness the good will and dedication of these, and other parents, to develop a charter and set up a working group to support the work of the school and build channels of communication between the parent body and the school community.

The student council was supported by a link teacher. Members self-nominated to be on the council, sometimes with encouragement from teachers. There was scope for the student council to have a stronger profile in the school and to have a more defined role. A recent fundraising endeavour to support a fellow student was very successful and many students spoke of the event with pride.

3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

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

The school had developed a number of roles to support students academically and holistically. There were one-to-one lessons scheduled to support students who displayed behaviours of concern or who needed targeted support to help them navigate learning obstacles. A large number of teachers had timetabled classes to support students in small group settings. Developing a whole-school Guidance plan will help ensure cohesion in the various supports, clarity around the various roles as well as a level of accountability to ensure the supports are effective.

Information was provided to support subject choice and every effort was made to ensure students' requests were met. SPHE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) provision was well planned and incorporated into the timetable for all students. Career guidance was provided by the guidance counsellors, and in some instances, by teachers under their direction. The guidance department will benefit from the added expertise of those working towards qualification.

Very good inclusive practices were observed during the inspection. Students from the Willow Wing were well supported to learn in the mainstream classes with their peers, where possible, and to mix in the general purpose areas during breaks.

Working and learning environments, both inside and outside the building, were maintained to a very high standard. School management was working hard to ensure the recreation space and playing fields were not overly impacted by the modular building.

Teachers were proactive in seeking opportunities to promote their subject areas and the GRETB supported some of these endeavours by providing financial support, when requested. Links were made with various community groups and as well as supporting students' wellbeing, this was also helping to raise the profile of the school in the wider community.

The school has a history of engaging with Erasmus exchanges. Many teachers and students have availed of opportunities to travel, and to see and experience educational provision in other countries. The school welcomes teachers and students who visit Clarin College. All such experiences are mutually beneficial and add hugely to the lifelong learning experiences of all involved.

Support systems provided by students were reported to be very successful. TY students who volunteered to mentor incoming first-year students were enthusiastic, and provided a welcome additional layer of support to help students manage the transition from primary school. Students who acted as digital ambassadors were reported by their peers, teachers and the parents met during the inspection to be of huge benefit to help others use the potential of technology to support their learning.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

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 welcomes the findings of the report and is fully committed to addressing the recommendations outlined. The Board has given careful consideration to the recommendations identified, and staff are fully committed to implementing improvements to address these areas and support ongoing school development. The Board also acknowledges the many positive findings within the report, particularly the positive relationships that exist between staff and students, the very good supports in place for students, the high-quality digital facilities and school environment, and the broad range of extra-curricular opportunities available to students.

Many follow-up actions have been planned and undertaken since the completion of the inspection to address the recommendations identified:

Firstly, we have reviewed our School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process. This process will now be extended into a structured five-year plan, supported by the Teaching and Learning Coordinator. This development will help to streamline and align current Teaching and Learning initiatives across the school, ensuring a more cohesive and strategic approach to school improvement.

Secondly, the school is currently engaging with the GRETB Teaching and Learning initiative aimed at strengthening subject department planning across the school. This initiative will support management in having greater oversight in monitoring and evaluating the work of subject departments, while also promoting further consistency and collaboration in planning and practice. Our continued emphasis on provision mapping will further support this work by ensuring that student needs and supports are clearly identified, monitored and reviewed in a structured manner.

With regard to policy review and development, work has commenced on the review of our Whole School Guidance Plan. This process will involve purposeful engagement with all stakeholders, including staff, students, parents and external agencies where appropriate. The completed plan will clearly outline the wide range of supports currently available to students and will strengthen the coordination of guidance provision throughout the school.

In addition, we are continuing to work closely with members of our school community to strengthen the role of the Parents' Association and to support parents in playing a more active and collaborative role within school life.

Overall, the school remains fully committed to ongoing improvement and values the recommendations provided through the inspection process as an important opportunity to further enhance teaching, learning and student support across 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