An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste Chiaráin
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Summerhill Athlone Co. Roscommon
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	68325L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	09/03/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	01/09/2026

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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
Child Protection	*Bí Cineálta*
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 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, RSE) 8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location	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 friendly version that is displayed where students 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 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.

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

Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning

Dates of inspection	04, 09, 10 and 11 March 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 groups	• 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

Coláiste Chiaráin is a co-educational post-primary school which was founded in 2017 after the amalgamation of St Aloysius and St Joseph's secondary schools. The school operates under the trusteeship of the Dioceses of Elphin and Achonry. Students are drawn from both a rural and urban catchment area. The number of students in the school has grown rapidly in the last few years and at the time of the evaluation enrolment stood at 1040 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). Among the school's supports are three special classes for students with autism. The school has recently been approved for the provision of additional accommodation in the form of an extension to the original school building.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- A very inclusive and positive environment was evident within the school.
- The board of management provided very good support to the school.
- The quality of teaching was good overall; the quality was very good or good in the vast majority of lessons. In a very small number of lessons, teacher practice required improvement to achieve a good standard.
- The quality of learning was good, with scope to further improve practices in some areas.
- The quality of leadership and management in the school was of a very high standard.
- There was evidence that teachers had implemented agreed school self-evaluation (SSE) strategies, especially in the use of formative feedback and reflection sheets for students to engage with after assessment windows.
- The quality of support for students' wellbeing was very good, supported by very effective care and support structures, wellbeing initiatives and a broad range of extra-curricular and co-curricular structures.

Recommendations

- Senior management should seek additional professional learning experiences for all teachers in the effective use of learning intentions, active learning methodologies, skill development, formative feedback and a broader range of assessment practices.
- Planning practices in some subject departments were good. The school should ensure that all subject departments develop improvement strategies and reflection practices.
- Priority learning targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART) need to be set for students with special educational needs in their Student Support Plans. Collaboration with parents and students should be sought to co-create and regularly review progress on those targets.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of teaching and learning

Learner outcomes and experiences

The quality of learning observed in lessons was good overall. The behaviour of students throughout the evaluation was excellent and student-teacher interactions in lessons were very respectful. This highly positive environment created a solid foundation for learning. As a result, it was evident that students generally enjoyed their lessons and were motivated to progress and achieve. Students excelled in the lessons where expectations for their ability and prior knowledge were suitably high.

Effective differentiation practices were evident in most lessons. In some cases, there was a need for the incorporation of extension exercises to further challenge and cater for the more-able students, to ensure they were not left waiting after completing tasks early. Students with special educational needs were included effectively in mainstream lessons and were supported in tasks and activities when required.

The classrooms generally had a variety of layouts that supported collaborative learning. Most classrooms had subject-specific materials displayed on walls, which included student work as exemplars of good practice. In some instances, this material was incorporated purposefully into the lesson to support and reinforce learning. The classroom layouts enabled teachers to incorporate collaborative learning in lessons.

While teachers shared learning intentions with students in the majority of lessons, this was an area that required further development. In some instances, what was shared with students were the activities that were to occur in lessons rather than the intended learning. Most teachers checked periodically during the lessons to see if the intended learning was taking place. This should be a regular feature of all lessons. In many cases, insufficient time was spent at the end of lessons to assess the level of student understanding of the main learning points. All students should be encouraged to use learning intentions to reflect and take ownership of their learning. Senior management should support teachers to upskill themselves with best practice in the use of learning intentions and effective assessment for learning (AfL) techniques. This should be linked with the school's priorities for its next SSE cycle.

Student engagement in learning was generally good or very good. Active learning was identified by the school as an essential component of one-hour lessons and was observed in all lessons during the evaluation. Some of the active learning methodologies would have benefited from better structures such as providing roles for all students in groups, the timing and pace of the activities chosen and how structured feedback was sought from groups at the conclusion. In some cases, teachers needed to introduce more variety into the type of active learning methodologies, to avoid the same type of activity being repeated multiple times or taking up too much time in the lesson. Teachers should include skill development, critical thinking and problem solving as part of active learning methodologies on a more consistent basis.

Digital technology was used by teachers in the majority of lessons. In a small number of lessons, students were able to use tablet devices to further support learning. While note-taking was only observed in a very small number of lessons, evidence from student copybooks and interactions with students indicated that this practice did occur periodically. The school should use digital technology to provide students with any notes they deem important, so that periods of students manually copying notes from a whiteboard are avoided.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The standard of teaching was good overall. The standard was good or very good in the vast majority of the lessons. In a very small number of lessons, teacher practice required improvement to achieve a good standard. Teachers demonstrated proficiency and enthusiasm in their subject areas. Classroom management skills were very good. Teachers often affirmed students for their efforts in lessons.

The preparation for lessons was good overall. Many teachers connected new concepts to students' prior learning or real-world applications. Generally, the lessons had a very good balance of teacher instruction and student activity. Practices such as whole-class demonstrations by the teacher, or an over-reliance on presentation slides that were text-heavy, made it difficult for students to create links to new learning. Teachers should seek to involve students as part of any demonstrations and only use presentation slides to consolidate learning after activities, where required.

In some cases, pace and timing were areas for improvement. For example, sometimes whole-class homework corrections took more time than intended and were not needed as many students had successfully completed the homework. Commendably in some lessons peer discussion occurred at the conclusion of activities and sources of potential learning from key skills were explored. However this was absent in other lessons, which would have benefited from teachers seeking feedback at the conclusion of the tasks, with a view to further engaging all students and maximising learning opportunities.

With regard to assessment practices observed in lessons, questioning was the main form noted, and it was of a very high standard overall. The very good practices of distributed questioning, the use of follow-up higher-order questioning, inclusive and differentiated questioning, and providing adequate time for students to formulate a response were observed in most lessons. Global questioning, chorus responses and insufficient time for students to develop answers were a feature in some cases, and these practices should be avoided.

The very good practice of sharing success criteria with students was observed in a small number of lessons. This enabled students to use exemplars of standard and reflect on the effectiveness of their work. This practice should be used more widely in the school.

Good examples of AfL strategies were evident in some lessons. These included the use of Traffic Light systems, Show-Me boards, exit strategies, and the digital technology platform to monitor learning. These and other AfL techniques should be shared more widely across subject departments to support all teachers in broadening their classroom assessment practices.

As part of the SSE process, the school had sought to improve formative feedback for students by using reflection sheets after assessment windows. It is commendable that the teachers had engaged with this strategy. There were some examples of homework assignments that were closely aligned to the subject-specific skills eventually assessed as part of the classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in junior cycle. This very good practice should be expanded on by all subject departments to support subject-specific skill development for junior and senior cycle students.

In a number of instances, the inspection team observed that students did not maintain handouts that teachers provided, portfolios of work, or copybooks to a high standard. As Managing Myself, Managing information and Thinking, and Managing Learning and Self are key components of the junior and senior cycle, the school should consider using credits in end-of-year reports to incentivise students to take greater care of portfolios, copybooks and other materials. This would enable students to value these key skills and competencies and further support learning in CBAs and additional assessment components (AACs).

In the majority of lessons, teachers provided oral feedback to students on their learning. There was some evidence of good-quality written feedback being provided periodically; this is an area for improvement overall. In order to complement the reflection-sheet strategy that occurred on a whole-school basis, subject departments should choose the aspects of students' work most suitable for providing written formative feedback so that students can take further ownership of their learning and develop improvement plans.

The quality of teachers' collaborative practice was good. Teachers shared practices through team teaching, meetings, department planning and through peer learning as part of the Droichead process for newly qualified teachers. As many of the practices observed in lessons were very good, senior management should consider extending the peer-observation process to give all teachers an opportunity to observe best practice within the context of their own school. Guidelines and procedures should be devised should the school choose to explore peer observation further.

While some subject department planning practices were good, this was an area that required improvement overall. For example, there was a need for a more consistent approach to

developing units of learning and schemes of work across departments. Where not already the case, schemes should ensure that learning outcomes are linked to specific methodologies and a variety of assessment modes. All schemes should provide detail in relation to timeframes. They should also incorporate a teacher-review section to support collaborative reflection and more efficient planning. These practices would enable the schemes of work to be used as working documents and would facilitate greater sharing of pedagogy and practices.

Subject departments should extend their analysis of state examination results beyond comparisons with national averages. They should consider the context of the year group and devise strategies and targets from the analysis for year-on-year improvement. Minutes of meetings should record progress or challenges to any agreed strategies or targets set by the subject departments.

2. Quality of school leadership and management

Leading learning and teaching

The leadership of learning and teaching was very good. Previous subject inspections had recommended improvements in areas such as group work, formative feedback and success criteria. Senior management provided teachers with guidelines and strategies to support active learning and initiated a whole-school post-assessment reflection approach as part of the SSE process. Good progress was evident in relation to active learning, and it was very evident that the vast majority of students were using the reflection sheets. Effective use of success criteria was observed in a small number of lessons.

The SSE process was used very effectively overall, though most of the improvements identified were in areas that, while important, were not directly linked to improving practices in classrooms. The school's future SSE priorities should include further improvements in areas of teaching and learning identified in this inspection report.

The school offered a very broad curriculum, and timetabling was very good overall. Guidance was not timetabled in the school, though modules were delivered through the SPHE courses in junior cycle. The board and senior management had addressed this issue through the recruitment and upskilling of staff in order to increase the number of guidance counsellors in the school. There will be a need to adjust the timetable for some subjects to accommodate the need for Guidance classes in senior cycle.

In recent years, the very good practices of team teaching and peer learning have been introduced. An effective mentoring programme was also in place to support new teachers. At times, senior management observed the newly qualified teachers' practice in lessons. This was highly commendable.

Senior management should ensure that staff can access teacher professional learning in particular areas. These areas should include the effective use of learning intentions, enhanced active learning methodologies, skills development, written formative feedback and broadening the range of assessment practices. As the current staff already has strengths in these areas, the school could consider creating in-school peer-learning opportunities to disseminate good practice.

The school had three special classes for students with autism, which provided support for up to nineteen students. The students had a variety of needs, and the teachers supporting them were focused on integrating them into mainstream lessons as often as possible, with good outcomes reported to date. In general, where lessons were observed that included students with autism, it was noted that they were successfully included in activities and worked with their peers.

Managing the organisation

The management of the organisation was very good. The board functioned very effectively and supported the school in staff recruitment and upskilling and ratifying statutory policies. The board was informed of the SSE strategies in the school and other school activities through a detailed principal's report. The board should review the length of the school year, ensuring that all students are provided with the required 166 days of tuition time as during the evaluation it was noted that this was not currently the case for all year groups.

The highly effective day-to-day running of the school by the staff and senior management led to an extremely positive school culture. The school facilities were maintained to a very high standard, and a calm and orderly atmosphere was evident throughout the evaluation. In surveys and meetings conducted during the evaluation, teachers and parents indicated very strongly that the school was very well run, and that the senior management team had an open and consultative management style. Student responses indicated that they got on very well with other students in the school and that they understood the school rules. In focus groups with parents and students, some concerns were expressed regarding consistency in the application of aspects of the school's code of behaviour. All stakeholders should be consulted when the code of behaviour is being reviewed.

Post-holders and others supported the effective running of the school through distributed leadership structures. Staff formed committees to support initiatives throughout the school, and many gave of their time to provide the wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities within the school. Teachers reported that there was very good communication among the staff in the school and that the in-school management system in the school was effective and had managed the changes that had taken place in the school very well.

The organisation and structures for special educational needs support were good. A number of non-post-holders were tasked with the oversight of a year group and the creation of the individualised student support files (SSFs) for students on the continuum of support. General targets and strategies to support the learning of these students were noted. SMART targets should be set for students with special educational needs in their Student Support Plans. Collaboration with parents and students should be sought to co-create and regularly review progress on those targets. The school should also create a formal reporting system for mainstream teachers, so that they can provide feedback on the effectiveness of in-class strategies and supports to the special educational needs department in a consistent manner throughout the year.

Leading school development

The quality of leading school development was very good. Very strong links had been established between the school and the wider community through foreign exchanges, sharing of facilities and pitches with local clubs, and work experience placements for students. Communication between senior management and the school patron, feeder primary schools, and external support agencies was very well established. An active parents' association supported the school in meeting development priorities, making changes to policies, and organising guest speakers for parents and fundraising events. A staff social club was in place to support staff wellbeing.

The board and senior management had been successful in securing approval for a school extension. The plans for this extension were underway, and this process will be a main priority for the board and staff in the coming years.

Student and parent responses to Inspectorate surveys were generally very positive but in some cases the responses received were inconclusive. In general, the areas of minor concern were around some aspects of communication. The board of management and the parents' association should look to promote their work to the wider parent body where possible. The school should explore if there are any other actions that could further support the various stakeholders.

Developing leadership capacity

Developing leadership capacity within the school was of a very high standard. The principal and deputy principals were very reflective leaders and regularly reviewed the effectiveness of processes in place. They periodically rotated duties among them to build their own capacity for learning and ensured that they were kept informed through agreed communication channels. Distributed leadership enabled teachers to become involved in school decisions. Staff reported that they felt empowered, supported and trusted to undertake tasks.

While the school had initiated a full review of posts of responsibility, it was noted that a sizeable number of these posts were largely administrative in nature. It was reported that some of these were required for short-term administrative duties that would not be required when the initiative or task was completed or integrated fully into the school system. As part of future reviews,

equity should be sought in relation to the tasks assigned to post-holders and priority should be given to posts that support improvements in teaching and learning.

Student leadership was supported in numerous ways across the school, such as the student council and a buddy system for incoming first-year students. Students were leading on school teams, musicals and other events, and were active members of school committees leading wellbeing or sustainability initiatives

3. Quality of support for students' wellbeing

Support for students' wellbeing was of a very high standard. A year-head system was in place, and students and parents reported that they knew who these individuals were and could contact them if required. A student-care team met weekly to consider and review supports, initiatives and actions for students that were identified as having social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Students reported that teachers were approachable when they needed support. A systematic and structured system for student referrals had been established. The school had a chaplain and several guidance counsellors, including an external counsellor to support students as required. These services were clearly communicated throughout the school.

The 400 hours of junior cycle wellbeing were in place through the provision of Physical Education (PE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) and tutorial classes for first-year and third-year students during the week. A tutorial booklet was created to support these lessons, and many modules and activities were used to engage students and support them in their school journey.

Student and parent surveys indicated that there was a good atmosphere in the school and students felt safe and cared for. The safe environment was evident throughout the evaluation as students moved around carefully and calmly to lessons and at break times. Very positive and respectful teacher-student interactions were observed in lessons and student-peer interactions were equally positive throughout the evaluation.

The school celebrated students' success and achievements throughout the year and at formal end-of-year ceremonies. The school was involved in Catholic Schools Week and participated in the John Paul II awards for parish and community involvement. Wellbeing initiatives such as an Anseo attendance strategy and a mental health program were two of the most recent attempts to make improvements in student wellbeing throughout the school.

The school promoted wellbeing and inclusion through a clubs and societies day at the start of the school year. Students had opportunities to sign up to the many extra-curricular and co-curricular activities that the school offered. These varied from time to time to respond to student requests for something new, or non-engagement with existing offerings. This flexibility of co-curricular provision was responsive to student voice, supporting students to flourish and to have a positive experience of school life.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes this comprehensive report and acknowledges the inspectors' recognition of strong leadership, collaborative culture, and student-centred ethos at Coláiste Chiaráin. We are particularly pleased with the commendations regarding distributed leadership, inclusive practices, and the quality of teaching and learning observed.

The board notes the affirmations of excellent pastoral care, proactive wellbeing supports, and effective use of data to inform planning. We appreciate the constructive recommendations aimed at enhancing self-evaluation processes and further developing assessment practices. The report also acknowledges the highly effective change management that has occurred in the school since its formation in 2017. The board is committed to implementing these recommendations systematically to ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of school provision and to build upon the strong foundations already established.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

- The board has already prioritised strengthening the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning though a comprehensive three year strategic plan. The plan, shared with the inspectorate during the evaluation, has now been approved by the board of management. This strategic plan, under the pillars of Teaching, Learning and assessment, Communication and Partnership, Leadership and Management, Ethos, Identity and Culture and Wellbeing and Support will inform a structured three-year SSE cycle that is aligned with school development planning priorities.
- In addition to, and complementary of, the wide and varied range of CPD and Professional Learning Experiences that are already undertaken by staff, the school will continue to develop its programme of staff development. As the school currently benefits from a highly skilled and experienced staff, we will further explore opportunities, as suggested in the report, for peer to peer learning so best practices can be shared at a whole school level in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school will review its subject planning practices to develop strategies for effective implementation of Senior Cycle reform and other teaching, learning and assessment priorities.
- Collaboration will continue with parents and students to further develop Students Support Plans to include SMART target setting and regular review.

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