

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning**

REPORT

**Saint Patrick's National School
Drumshanbo, County Leitrim
Uimhir rolla: 19423J**

Date of inspection: 29 April 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Saint Patrick's National School in April 2015. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. The board of management 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.

Saint Patrick's National School is a co-educational vertical school operating under the patronage of the diocese of Ardagh. The current enrolment is 218 pupils. Enrolment trends are stable and pupil attendance is very good.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is very good, with many instances of excellent teaching in evidence during this evaluation.
- Pupils are confident, competent and enthusiastic in their learning.
- Pupils are achieving very high standards in Mathematics and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE).
- The current rich and highly skilled focus on Music is enriching pupils' experience of learning in this area and is testimony to wonderful commitment of the teachers and principal.
- The principal works in a very conscientious manner and displays a strong commitment to the education and well-being of all pupils. She provides very effective and visionary leadership to the whole school community.
- The very good engagement with the school self-evaluation process is impacting positively on teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A more explicit differentiated approach to learning is required to ensure that all pupils are learning in accordance with their ability.
- It is recommended that a closer link be made between individual education plans (IEPs) and the diagnosed needs of pupils.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are of a very high standard.
- Whole-school approaches in literacy contribute very successfully to the quality of learning in English. Pupils use subject-specific vocabulary very effectively across all curricular areas. They demonstrate very positive attitudes to reading, which is fostered through a range of well-planned and delivered reading initiatives. Many pupils read confidently and fluently at an appropriate level, although there is potential to improve their reading expression. Written work is of a very good standard and literacy attainments in standardised tests are very good.
- Pupils' attainments in Mathematics are high. Pupils have a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts and their ability to form links between these concepts is at an advanced level. They have very well-developed computation skills and demonstrate a strong capacity to engage successfully in problem-solving. Attainments in standardised tests are high.
- Is inmholta gnóthachtail na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge ar an iomlán. Léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint chuí ar an teanga agus ta sé ar a gcumas struchtúr a chur ar abairtí simplí. Chabhródh cur chuige téamúil uile-scoile go mór leis an teanga labhartha a shaibhriú. Cé go léann

formhór na ndaltaí le tuiscint agus líofacht chreidiúnach, tá scóip le raon an ábhair léitheoireachta Gaeilge a leathnú agus a shaibhriú ar bhonn uile-scoile. Moltar deiseanna breise a thabairt do na daltaí scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách a chleachtadh chun a n-eispéiris fhoghlama a leathnú. Is inmholta na cleachtais nua atá á gcur i bhfeidhm maidir le díolúine ón nGaeilge a thabhairt do dhaltaí.

Pupil attainment in Irish is praiseworthy, in general. Pupils display an appropriate understanding of the language and can construct simple sentences. A whole-school thematic approach would help to enrich pupils' oral language. While a majority of pupils read with reasonable fluency and understanding, there is scope to broaden and enrich the range of Irish reading material on a whole-school basis. It is recommended that more independent writing opportunities be provided to extend the pupils' learning experience. The revised practices in respect of giving exemptions for Irish are commended.

- High standards are achieved in musical performances. The pupils sing with energy and enthusiasm and their instrumental play is very accomplished. The current focus on working with the National Children's choir is having a beneficial effect on increasing interest and capacity in all aspects of Music.
- Learning outcomes in SESE are excellent. Pupils discuss their learning with admirable enthusiasm, are very confident in conducting scientific experiments and are producing high-quality written work.
- Assessment processes are of a good standard and considerable efforts are made to ensure that pupils' outcomes are tracked over time. This assists in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of particular interventions and supports and also informs target-setting and analysis in the context of school self-evaluation.
- For pupils in receipt of support, there was evidence of very good quality learning achievements where detailed pupil profiles were maintained and updated, where targets for individual programmes were SMART and where teachers maintained written reviews of pupil progress. This practice should be extended to all teachers who work in support roles.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well paced, appropriately structured and facilitate pupil engagement. There is, however, potential to increase differentiation of work for pupils.
- There is a very commendable emphasis on play-based methodologies in the infant classes. Teachers employ a wide range of active and collaborative learning methodologies, although the use of work books in some contexts should be reduced.
- The quality of teaching in English is very good. Purposeful vocabulary development, a whole-school approach to the teaching of writing genres, a graded approach to the teaching of reading and extensive use of novels as core texts were features of the very effective practice observed in classrooms.
- Pupils are afforded limited opportunities to engage in hands-on use of information and communication technologies (ICT). ICT should now be further integrated into teaching and learning, in line with the existing recognition given to this issue by board and staff.
- The commitment of teachers to providing support using a range of models incorporating team teaching and in-class support is very commendable. The very specific roles adopted by teachers in in-class support contexts are highly commendable.
- Clearer documentation of the staged approach and differentiated learning outcomes for individual pupils should be included in teachers' planning.
- There is a strong commitment to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN). Pupils of the class for children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) participate eagerly and effectively in a range of subject areas with their mainstream peers. The overall quality of teaching provided for pupils with SEN is good, although this varies between settings. Some exemplary practices by individual teachers were observed, which consisted of highly effective programmes of work designed to meet the priority learning needs of pupils. There is currently an over-emphasis on individual learning programmes, which are based on textbook content in the class for children with ASDs. This practice should be balanced by more whole-class work to promote social and communication skills, supplemented with differentiated individual activities.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pupils exhibited exemplary behaviour during the evaluation. They are cooperative, confident and positive in their learning.
- From the analysis of questionnaires to pupils, it can be determined that almost all pupils have very positive opinions of school life. Parents indicated similarly positive attitudes in their responses to questionnaires. Almost all parents agreed that teaching is good in the school and that their child is making good progress.
- The school communicates effectively with parents through a wide range of channels, including a very informative website, blog and parents' newsletter. The parents' association and parent body are very supportive of the work of the school.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. Leadership and Management

- The board of management is very informed and proactive in supporting the work of the school. The school is very well resourced and the board is currently prioritising investment in ICT. The school building and environs are maintained to a very high standard. School accounts are audited on an annual basis and a treasurer's report is appended to the minutes of each board meeting.
- The principal works in a very conscientious manner and displays a strong commitment to the education and well-being of all pupils. She provides very effective and visionary leadership to the whole school community. She is ably supported by the deputy principal and the in-school management team who undertake their duties with due diligence and care.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has formulated a school improvement plan (SIP) and a school self-evaluation report on the work being undertaken in literacy and numeracy. Clear priorities for improvement have been identified following meaningful consultation with pupils, parents and staff. This very good engagement with the school self-evaluation process is impacting positively on teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is very good. The staff and management have taken ownership of the school self-evaluation process and are focused in their approach to school development and improvement. This commitment to self-evaluation is a significant strength of the school.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM of St. Patrick's NS school accepts and welcomes the findings of this inspection report. We feel it is an accurate reflection of the high standards of teaching and learning in our school. We are gratified that the report recognises the work and commitment of the whole school community and acknowledges the contribution of pupils, parents, teaching staff, ancillary staff and management.

We feel that the report affirms our pride in our school and supports us in our endeavours as we continue to develop the school for the well-being and achievement of our pupils.

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 school will evaluate and review methods of differentiation used in longterm planning. We will use the staged approach (as outlined in the Learning Support Guidelines) as our model.

IEPs will continue to be informed by the diagnosed needs of pupils. Formats for IEPs will be standardised in the school to ensure that this is whole school practice. SMART targets will be set and reviewed regularly.