

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Follow-Through Inspection
REPORT

The Harold School, Glasthule,
Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 20141G

Date of inspection: 27 November 2015



Date of publication/issue of original report	June 2014	Type of original report	Whole School Evaluation – Management, Learning and Leadership (WSE - MLL)	Date of FT inspection	27 November 2015
Follow-through inspection activities					
<p><i>The following activities took place in the course of the follow-through inspection:</i></p> <p>Meeting with principal Meeting with relevant teachers/members of staff Observation of teaching and learning Meeting with members of the school's SEN team Meetings with representatives of the school's Board of Management Review of school documentation</p>					
Recommendation in original inspection report	Progress achieved to date on implementation of recommendation				
The board should ensure that it is compliant with all regulatory, procedural and statutory requirements.	<p>Partial Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The board is now ensuring that it is compliant with key obligations in respect of reporting on child protection matters at board meetings, and that the certification of accounts for the 2012/2013 and the 2013/2014 school years has taken place. The board has also adopted greater procedural rigour regarding the maintenance of board minutes and the drawing up of meeting agendas. Significant compliance gaps still exist however, most notably, non-compliance with Circular 02/05 (the board currently deploys one of its allocated support teachers in a mainstream setting contrary to Circular 02/05). Further, the accounts for several of the years prior to 2012/2013 appear not to have been externally audited / certified as required under section 18 of the Education Act 1998. It is unclear as to how effectively board members are collaborating in the fulfilment of board functions. There is little evidence of a shared vision for the school amongst board members and discussions with both the principal and board members suggest that a number of competing and often conflicting priorities exist at board level, making it difficult for the board to conduct its ordinary business. The minutes of board meetings in recent months strongly suggest that this is the case. A number of board members have resigned their positions and the recent appointment of a new chairperson by the patron is the second such appointment since 2013. 				
Structures should be put in place for meaningful, participative engagement by all stakeholders in policy formation, implementation and review.	<p>No Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The board has not formally discussed this recommendation since the original evaluation. There is no evidence of effective structures to facilitate meaningful engagement with the stakeholders, namely, parents, pupils and teachers, in policy formation, implementation and review. Members of the board of management were open to considering how such engagement might be facilitated within the school's self-evaluation process. 				
The board should review the plant, its facilities and environs, in light of the increased enrolment and take the actions necessary to ensure an environment appropriate to the delivery of a 21st century education for pupils.	<p>No Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The board has not formally discussed this recommendation since the original evaluation. A long-term plan has not been created by the board for the plant, its facilities and environs. The board has not engaged in any research regarding possibilities for an environment appropriate to the delivery of a 21st century education for pupils. Considerable time has been spent at board level on a discussion around the use of parts of the school site. The issue has caused considerable disharmony amongst members of the board and the stakeholders. 				
To ensure that pupils are adequately challenged in their learning, greater use should be made of differentiated teaching. This requires more effective assessment practices to track pupil progress and inform programmes of learning.	<p>Good Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A commendable whole-school system for the tracking of pupil achievement has been developed. There is evidence from the selection of lessons viewed, that differentiated group teaching is in more widespread use in the school. Assessment information is being used to inform group formation and to provide learning experiences with an appropriate level of challenge. In senior classes, the use of differentiated novels is a positive development and ensures that pupils are more effectively challenged at an individual level in their reading. This complements the existing highly effective practices around emergent and early reading in the infant and junior classes. Plans are in place to develop a more individualised approach to pupils' reading experience in the middle classes. Positive use is being made of assessment information in mathematics, and the development of pupils' higher-order problem-solving skills has been prioritised at a whole school level. Analysis has taken place of pupils' achievement levels across the topics in 				

	<p>mathematics and use is made of this information in several learning settings. In a small number of learning settings, the use of this assessment information is at an early stage of development.</p>
<p>Greater whole-school use should be made of curriculum approaches that increase pupil engagement in learning.</p>	<p>Very Good Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In almost all of the lessons evaluated, there was evidence of very good curriculum approaches and methodologies, resulting in high levels of pupil engagement. In a number of learning settings, these practices were exemplary. Such practices included collaborative tasks, clearly defined roles in group work, purposeful pair work, open-ended exploration and pupil-led learning. • The implementation of Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework in the infant classes is a positive development that is having a very good impact on pupils' learning experience and outcomes. • There was evidence of excellent investigative and collaborative approaches to mathematical tasks in a number of classrooms. • The school has recently invested in its ICT infrastructure and pupils are receiving opportunities to use ICT to support their learning. Plans to develop this aspect of provision further to integrate ICT into pupils' learning are a welcome development.
<p>A system to share effective pedagogical practices should be developed and greater opportunities for professional collaborative discussion should be provided for the teaching staff.</p>	<p>Partial Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most teachers now plan in class level groups, which allows for discussion and sharing of effective practices. An additional focus has been placed on teaching and learning matters at whole-staff meetings. • During the 2014 / '15 school year individual teachers facilitated peer observation and one small group of teachers worked together using a lesson study model to plan, view and reflect on practice. • The sharing of effective practice has also been facilitated through the in-class interventions, listed below.
<p>The potential for in-class support should be maximised and such interventions should be more targeted.</p>	<p>Good Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class interventions have been developed at a variety of class levels to address pupils' needs and skills in the areas of phonics, spelling, comprehension, writing genre, oral language and problem solving. These interventions are having a positive impact on pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. The school-year has been divided into blocks to facilitate the roll-out these interventions, and the structure and impact of the work is regularly reviewed. • Baseline assessment information has been established for some of these interventions, which allows teachers to monitor progress in pupil achievement. Other interventions, for example the intervention on narrative writing, would benefit from the establishment of a clear baseline on pupils' achievement levels and from a more formalised focus on assessment for learning practices. • The decision to deploy one of the school's GAM / EAL teachers in a mainstream class for the 2015 / '16 school year has affected the school's capacity to resource some in-class interventions.

Summary of findings

The teaching staff and members of the in-school management team have embraced and are acting on the teaching and learning recommendations outlined in the original report. These recommendations have informed discussion at staff level and they have been progressed through the school's Self-Evaluation process and School Improvement Plans. Overall there is good progress with regard to these recommendations.

There has been no significant progress on the three recommendations that pertain to the board of management. The continued poor functioning of the board is a significant cause for concern.

Recommendations

- The working of the board of management needs to be reformed to ensure that the school is effectively governed, is compliant with all regulatory, procedural and statutory requirements and so that board members share a common sense of purpose. The patron should take urgent action to support the school in the development of effective governance processes.
- Once the board of management is functioning effectively, it should consult with the stakeholders on policy formation, implementation and review. A strategic plan for the school's site and future building needs should also be developed.
- Efforts should continue at a whole school level to continue to develop teaching practices that maximise learner engagement, facilitate differentiation and ensure that learners are adequately challenged.
- The positive start that has been initiated with regard to the sharing of practice should be systematically developed and all teachers should be provided with opportunities to view and collaboratively reflect on teaching practices.

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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of The Harold School welcomes the report of the Inspectorate after the Follow-through Inspection conducted on the 27th of November 2015. The board welcomes in particular the strengths identified in the teaching and learning in the school and commends the leadership, middle management and teaching staff of the school for their positive response to recommendations made in the WSE-MLL report. The current Board acknowledges the recommendations and observations in this report and together the Patron, the board, the in-school management team and the teaching staff are committed to implementing the recommendations of the report.

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 current Board of Management of the Harold School is and will to continue to be in close contact with the Patron with regard to governance and compliance with all diocesan, regulatory, statutory and procedural requirements. This continuing process will ensure that we move forward with a common sense of purpose.

The Board of Management is now functioning effectively and will consult with all stakeholders on policy formation, implementation and review as well as other matters. As a matter of urgency the board is also in the process of developing a strategic plan for the school's site and future building needs.

Plans are continuing to develop a more individualised approach to pupils' reading experience in the middle classes by using differentiated reading materials which will ensure that learners are adequately challenged. A clear baseline to establish pupils' achievement levels and to identify SMART targets will be an essential part of all future in-class interventions at all levels. A renewed focus on Assessment for Learning practices will be used to inform these targets.

Current good practice in collaborative planning and the sharing of effective practice will continue at all class levels and in LS/R. The principal and deputy principal will facilitate peer observation and enable teachers to work together to plan, view and reflect on practice by timetabling these opportunities and providing the necessary supervision.