Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Tubber National School
Tubber, Co. Clare

Uimhir rolla: 10886E

Date of inspection: 15 May 2014
Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was carried out in Tubber National School in May 2014. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed, interaction with pupils, review of pupils’ work, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, a selection of school documents, and meetings with the principal, special-duties teacher and a representative of the board of management. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. There are two mainstream class teachers and three teachers provide learning support and additional teaching support to pupils with special educational needs. At the time of the evaluation, twenty-two pupils were enrolled. Pupils’ school attendance rates are generally very good. 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.

The school has strengths in the following areas:

- The work of the principal in leading the school is highly commendable.
- The quality of teaching is consistently very good.
- The pupils are confident and expressive and their knowledge across the curriculum is good to very good.
- There are noteworthy strengths in teaching and learning in Science. The school has a strong record of success in this area.
- The standard of pupils’ work in copies, their handwriting and of the overall presentation of their work is very good.
- Pupils’ learning and educational experiences are well extended through very good use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and through participation in a wide range of activities and events.

The following recommendations are made:

- More support for pupils in the form of early intervention should be provided.
- To ensure that pupils have access to school accommodation which is fully appropriate to meeting their needs, the board should examine all the options available to it and it should set out on a course of action to address the matter.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are good to very good in English and in Mathematics. Pupils exhibit good mastery of core concepts and skills. Sa Ghaeilge, tá scilleanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí ar chaighdeán maithe. The pupils’ communication skills in Irish are good.

- For the most part, the diverse nature of pupils’ needs is well catered for through differentiated teaching. Very good systems are in place to assess pupils’ progress through formal and informal assessment strategies and through pupil self-assessment. Analyses of test results indicate that the majority of pupils are making very good progress.
• The school's commitment to pupils' holistic development is most noteworthy. Pupils’ learning and educational experiences are well extended through very good use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). They are enabled to participate in a wide range of activities and events across the curriculum. These include local activities in sport and in the Arts, in quizzes and in various projects and competitions. The school and individual pupils have enjoyed notable successes through participation in these activities.

2. Quality of teaching

• The overall quality of teaching is consistently very good. The teachers are very committed to their roles and they participate regularly in professional development. They plan carefully for their work in the form of long-term and short-term plans. Very broad curriculum coverage is achieved.

• English is very well taught. The pupils read and speak confidently and expressively. Skills in handwriting are developed methodically and pupils’ handwriting and presentation of work are of a very good standard. The quality of pupils’ written work across the curriculum, in class blogs and particularly in Science is very good.

• The teaching of Mathematics is very good. Problem-solving skills are taught in a consistent manner. The pupils use concrete materials regularly and they engage in active exploration of topics. They display a very good understanding of mathematical concepts and very good ability to recall number facts. They also demonstrate good understandings of the connections between mathematics and real-life scenarios through role-play, work in the real environment and Science.

• Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc go han-mhaith. Tá stór mór amhrán, rann agus dánta ar eolas ag na daltaí agus glacann siad páirt i ndrámaí agus i rólghlacadh go tionnmhar. Is fiú go mór na deiseanna éisteachta a thugtar dóibh trí mhúnlú na léitheoireachta agus úsáid áiseanna closamhairc. Léann siad scéalta, dánta, téacsleabhair, agus leabhair bhreise le líoacht agus cruinneas agus tá a gcumas scribhneoireachta sa Ghaeilge ar chaighdeán maith.

• In Irish, the standard of teaching is very good. The pupils know a large collection of songs, rhymes and poetry and they participate in dramas and in role play enthusiastically. Worthwhile listening opportunities are provided for them through modelled reading and use of audio-visual materials. They read stories, poems, text books and additional readers fluently and accurately and their ability to write in Irish is good.

• The teachers’ diligence in developing pupils’ knowledge and skills in Social Environmental and Scientific Education is highly commendable. The pupils produce very good project work incorporating creative use of ICTs and they participate in school-twinning projects. Guest speakers visit the school regularly and field trips are carried out. Pupils can readily recall and discuss key facts in a wide range of topics. Very good quality teaching is noted in Music and high standards are achieved by pupils, especially in music literacy and performance.

• The overall quality of the support provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. A very inclusive environment is generated and support is provided in a caring, affirming manner. Good-quality planning is compiled and commendably, this incorporates some input from pupils’ parents. Teaching features clear explanations, practical demonstrations and the use of appropriate programmes. Pupils generally make good progress. In some instances, there is scope for the school to employ more differentiated reading materials to allow pupils to develop their reading skills and reading fluency at a more realistic rate. The manner in which support is organised and allocated should be reviewed in line with the Learning Support Guidelines and Circular SP ED 02/05. The school should provide more support in the form of early intervention and of further in-class support.
3. Support for pupils’ wellbeing

- The quality of support for pupils’ wellbeing is very good. Pupils’ interests and skills are very well developed. A clear code of behaviour and positive behaviour management strategies are implemented, contributing greatly to a very welcoming and positive school climate. Worthwhile activities and programmes are undertaken to encourage healthy lifestyles. Pupils are given regular opportunities to make presentations, to discuss topics and to engage in circle-time activities ensuring that their opinions are heard and considered at classroom and at whole-school level.

- 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 quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management functions effectively. School accounts are certified annually. A principal’s report is provided at each of the regular board meetings ensuring that the board is well informed about the work of the school. The school is well resourced and a policy on teachers’ continuing professional development is actively promoted.

- The accommodation available for teaching and learning is very limited and as the school site is very restricted, it is not conducive to a building extension. At the time of the evaluation, plans were afoot for a refurbishment to increase, to the extent possible, the amount of space available for teaching and learning. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that the board should examine all the options available to it to ensure that pupils have access to school accommodation which is fully appropriate to meeting their needs and that it should set out on a course of action to address the matter.

- The principal provides very high-quality school leadership. She sets out and addresses clear and well-focused priorities. Her expertise in ICT is used effectively to develop efficient school-administration systems and to broaden pupils’ educational experiences. She responds proactively to the needs of the school and community. Very good instructional leadership is in evidence; the principal leads the school self-evaluation process very successfully and she is working towards expanding the school’s assessment strategies.

- The special-duties teacher undertakes a range of duties attentively. The duties which were formally reviewed recently, include co-ordinating the celebration of the sacraments as well as activities and projects which complement and extend pupils’ learning. In conjunction with the principal, commendable work has been carried out in devising and reviewing policies.

- There is very good communication between teachers and with parents. Staff meetings are productive and focussed on school-improvement issues. Responses received through questionnaires issued to the parents during the WSE-MLL indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the school. Parental and community involvement in the school are welcomed.

5. School Self-evaluation (SSE)
• Very good progress is being made in SSE. In identifying key areas for development, the school has carefully analysed test results and has engaged in consultation with pupils and parents. The school report and school improvement plan are clear and incorporate measurable time-bound targets for improvements in mathematics. Teachers are in the process of implementing agreed actions.

Conclusion

• The school’s capacity for further improvement and to implement recommendations is very good.

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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 of Tubber National School welcomes the very positive report of the inspectorate. They welcome the acknowledgement of the very good and consistent quality of teaching by all staff working in the school along with the highly commendable work by the principal in leading the school. The Board appreciates the very high satisfaction rate among parents and welcomes the parental and community involvement in the school. The whole-school community found the W.S.E. process to be a very positive, affirming and rewarding process.

On behalf of everyone in the school community, the Board is gratified to be in receipt of such an affirming report.

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

In accordance with the recommendations in the report Tubber N.S. has implanted the Literacy lift-off programme for the junior classes since September 2014. The purpose of this is to provide early intervention support for pupils.

With regards to the recommendation to improve the school accommodation, Tubber N.S. has built on a room to the school building and this room is now being used for multiple purposes by students and staff.