

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

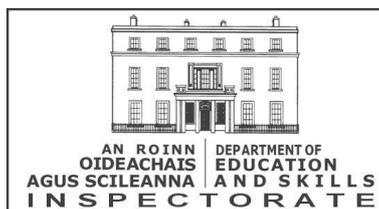
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Burnfort National School
Mallow, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 11249C**

Date of inspection: 17 November 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Burnfort National School in November 2014. 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 acting principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires and a review of a representative sample of school documents. 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.

Burnfort National School is a rural mixed school in which, currently, 122 pupils are enrolled. It is a welcoming school with a strong community focus, a clear ethos and a positive future orientated vision. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne.

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

- The school is effectively and very efficiently managed.
- Leadership has been effectively distributed in the school.
- The standard of teaching in the school is very good.
- The learning achievements of pupils are, generally, very good.
- The well-being of pupils is afforded a high priority in the school.

The following areas **require improvement**:

- The communicative approach to language-learning should be further developed in Irish.
- The educational experiences of pupils should be further developed through more purposeful exploration of the educational opportunities of the school environment in appropriate curricular areas.
- Classroom planning practices should be reviewed to ensure that the optimum use is made of whole school curricular planning.
- A summary model of recording progress should be developed in order to facilitate the easy analysis of continuity and development of learning in all curricular areas on a whole school basis.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning attainment of pupils is, generally, very good. Pupils are articulate and confident and have a good sense of place. Across the curriculum their knowledge, skills and attitudes are satisfactory and learning is effectively consolidated. With respect to literacy and numeracy attainment, for example, standardised test results indicate very satisfactory overall levels of pupil achievement. Given that good use is made of quantitative data to track pupil attainment in numeracy and literacy there would be value in also using standardised tests in Irish to acquire quantitative data on pupil achievement levels as a base for curricular development initiatives in the language.
- Pupils at risk of underachieving are also supported in an effective manner and their learning needs are met through positive engagement with appropriate learning and life skills programmes. Every effort is made to develop learning targets which are clear and measurable. Regular progress reviews occur and links between support initiatives, classroom programmes of work and the home are satisfactory.

2. The quality of teaching

The overall quality of teaching in the school was observed to be very good and teacher preparedness for lessons was of a high standard. The teaching environment is well developed, within the school, and, a wide range of useful resources is made available. A wide variety of teaching methods is also used to engage and challenge pupils and all teachers are very aware of the learning needs of their class groupings. Parental responses to a range of questions on the school indicated that almost all parents believed that teaching is good in the school and parents are happy that their children are safe and well looked after at school. Similarly, pupil questionnaire responses indicated that the children have, in almost all instances, a very positive view of their school and of themselves as learners.

Notwithstanding the above and as a means to further develop good practice the staff are advised to reflect on the following points:

- With respect to the use of ICT as a key tool for teaching and learning it would be wise, at this point, for the staff to develop school practices on the optimum usage of technology and to reflect on its effective application in key areas of curriculum provision.
- With respect to development of social, scientific, environmental and civic education there is scope for development with respect to the exploration of the educational opportunities that exist in the environment. Nature and historical trails could be developed. Likewise, the development of a school garden would be a suitable project to support existing sustainability and re-cycling practices.
- In Mathematics education the development of mathematical trails and more focus on the environmental learning opportunities that exist on-site would further enhance existing good practices. A whole-school discussion on the use of textbooks as the dominant resource for Mathematics education would also benefit the staff.
- Cé go múintear an Ghaeilge go córasach agus spreagtar na daltaí chun suime go héifeachtach b'fhiú fós plean forbartha nua a bhunú a chuireann béim sa bhreis ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach agus ar úsáid na Gaeilge ar bhonn rialta trasna na scoile.
Though Irish is taught systematically and pupils are motivated effectively there is a need to develop a new strategic plan which further emphasises the communicative approach and the regular use of the language across the school.
- With respect to development of reading as a cornerstone of learning across the curriculum it is advised that, where possible, all class libraries be re-stocked on a regular basis to ensure that a suitable choice of reading material is available to pupils of all ages.

3. How well pupils are cared for and supported

- Pupils are very happy in the school which provides, for them, an inclusive, supportive and stable learning environment. A positive code of behaviour is in place and home-school and teacher-pupil relationships are very good. Pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil relationships were also observed to be extremely positive. A range of co-curricular activities, to support and enhance curriculum provision in key areas such as Music and Physical Education, are provided. Extra-curricular opportunities in line with local sporting, cultural and religious traditions and practices are also provided. The support of the Parents' Association in the co-curricular and in the extra-curricular programme of activity is a key factor in its success.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification.

4. Leadership and management

- The board of management guides and supports the work of the school in a very effective manner. Members give of their time and expertise generously, know the school well and are committed to renewal and development. They oversee the administrative and financial affairs of the school efficiently, maintain a well-appointed and suitable premises for teaching and learning and have strategic vision for the future. In addition, the board is open to honest reflection and have a good knowledge of what is going well and what is not going so well. With respect to educational standards the board expressed absolute trust in the work of the acting principal and staff and is satisfied that the well-being and education of all pupils is being effectively managed. At the time of the evaluation school leadership and management had a shared understanding of the challenges facing the school and a clear focus on school improvement and renewal was in evidence. In that respect it is recommended to the board, that all relevant continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for the staff, which are in line with agreed school priorities, are facilitated and, where possible, supported.

The principal, in an acting capacity since the beginning of the school year, has made a valuable contribution to school life. She has empowered her colleagues to develop a collegial working environment in which the contributions of all team members are valued. At the time of the evaluation morale in the school was very high and a positive team orientation was in evidence.

Excellent work has been done in renewing whole school planning and this should, in due course, be extended to classroom planning as well as to the maintenance of monthly records

All other staff members have responded to the opportunities provided and the joint efforts of the staff in reflecting on and renewing, where necessary, school plans and policies have been of great value in managing change and identifying future priorities and directions. With respect to policy development practices, it is important to also provide a formal mechanism which facilitates the voice of parents in order to further develop the collaborative base for policy development in general.

- All other ancillary staff greatly assist in the day-to-day operation of the school.

5. School self-evaluation

- The process of school self-evaluation (SSE) has commenced in the school and, in year one there was a whole school focus on promoting the use of punctuation skills in the written work of pupils. This strategy was successfully implemented. In the current year a whole school focus on numeracy has been selected and strategy is under development.

At this point in time the school's capacity to manage change and promote an improvement agenda is very good as there is a commitment to ongoing reflection and development amongst the staff which is supported by management and the wider community.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Management and Staff of Burnfort National School would like to thank the Department of Education & Skills Inspectorate for the professional and constructive manner in which they carried out the evaluation. We found the inspection to be both positive and affirming. We are delighted that the report reflects and acknowledges the positive aspects of our school, the recognised strengths and the close working relationship that exists between the board of management, staff, parents and the wider community, in order to enhance the quality of the educational experience of each child. We welcome the acknowledgement of the high standards of teaching and learning in our school. We are pleased with the recognition of the *'inclusive, supportive and stable learning environment'* present in Burnfort National School.

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

Management and Staff are happy to embrace the recommendations of the inspectorate and are presently working through this particular agenda. Areas such as continuous professional development (CPD) and refreshing the school library are contingent on available resources and will receive prioritization based on this requirement.