

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

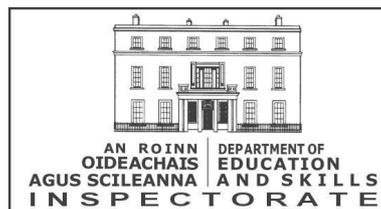
**Whole School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

**Slieveardagh National School,  
The Commons, Thurles,  
Co. Tipperary**

**Uimhir rolla: 11470B**

**Date of inspection: 2 October 2014**



## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Slieveardagh National School in October 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 principal, deputy principal, representatives of the board of management and representatives of the parents' association, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection 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.

Slieveardagh NS is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emlý. There are fifty-three pupils enrolled, a small number of whom have a poor attendance record.

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

- Pupil attainment in Mathematics has, for the most part, recently improved.
- The school promotes in-school participation of parents in the development of pupils' reading skills.
- The teachers are effective communicators and they explain content clearly in lessons.
- Teacher expectations of pupil behaviour are high and the pupils' behaviour is good.
- The quality of supports for pupils' wellbeing is good.
- The board of management and the parents' association are supportive of the work of the school.
- The principal has successfully cultivated positive relationships across the school community.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The pupils' expressive language skills in English should be developed using focused language-learning activities, drawn from specific curriculum objectives.
- In Mathematics, learning activities should be more closely matched to the pupils' abilities and needs.
- The school should re-examine provision for special education in order to comply with the requirements of the Special Education Circular 02/05 on the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning.
- Both the Code of Behaviour and the Enrolment Policy should be reviewed to ensure compliance with Department guidelines and procedures.
- The board of management should develop a three-year plan detailing the particular curriculum and organisational priorities to be addressed.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall quality of the learning achievements of pupils is satisfactory. The development of reading skills which incorporates learning of phonics, word-attack skills, and the use of graded reading material is well addressed. The planned introduction of the class novel will support the promotion of reading for pleasure. There is a need to develop the pupils' expressive oral language skills in English using focused language-learning activities, drawn from specific curriculum objectives Sa Ghaeilge, tá gá le scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt trí chlár foghlama níos

structúrtha agus níos céimniúla a chur i bhfeidhm. *In Irish, the pupils' ability to speak the language should be improved through the implementation of a more structured and incremental programme of learning.* Teachers explain mathematical content clearly and in most instances improvement is noted in pupils' attainment in Mathematics. While many pupils exhibit good levels of engagement and application to tasks, their listening skills should be developed further.

- Assessment practices are satisfactory. All teachers carry out assessments on a range of pupils' learning experiences and the school administers standardised tests in reading and Mathematics annually. There is however, scope to increase differentiation to ensure that learning activities consistently match pupils' abilities.
- Commendably, the school promotes the participation of parents in learning and the annual scheme of in-class parental support in reading is due to commence shortly.

## **2. Quality of teaching**

- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teachers are effective communicators and deliver suitably structured lessons at an appropriate pace. Lessons are primarily teacher-directed and delivered on a whole-class basis. A wider variety of teaching methodologies that promote independent and collaborate learning skills is recommended. It is further advised that the school reviews the number of textbooks at each class level and consider their impact on the range of learning activities provided for the pupils. Scope for the development in the use of Information Communication Technology was noted during the evaluation.
- In special education settings the teachers' engagement with their pupils is positive and affirming. Suitable priority is afforded to the promotion of the pupils' skills in literacy and in numeracy. Individual education plans (IEPS) detailing targets for learning are prepared for pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching. The provision of a greater range of diagnostic assessment data is recommended to inform these specific targets and to measure individual pupil progress. Recommendations from external agencies should be prioritised within IEPs.
- Both support teachers currently teach whole-class groups and therefore, the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning, outlined in Special Education Circular 02/05, is not being implemented. The school should review provision for special education in order to comply with the requirement of the Circular. Further attention should be directed to early intervention and prevention strategies through the development of in-class models of support in the junior classroom.

## **3. Support for pupils' well-being**

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is good. All pupils are valued members of the school community and are treated with equality, fairness and respect. Teacher expectations of pupil behaviour are high and the pupils' behaviour is good. Most are motivated and interested in their learning.
- The principal reports improved punctuality among the pupils. The introduction of incentives to encourage and to improve attendance is praised. Further work should be undertaken in this regard as a small number of pupils have a poor attendance record. The school should, in consultation with parents, review its policy on attendance.
- The school communicates regularly with parents, through its newsletter. The parents' association productively supports the work of the school. Commendably, almost all parents who responded to the survey reported that the school regularly seeks the views of parents on school matters.

- 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 supportive of the work of the school. While the board meets regularly, the requirement to convene a minimum of five meetings per year should be fulfilled.
- Some organisational policies have been recently reviewed. The board should ratify and sign these policies. Both the enrolment policy and the code of behaviour should be revised to ensure compliance with Department guidelines and procedures.
- All curricular policies require review to ensure they reflect both current practice and school context. It is recommended that the board develop a three-year plan detailing the particular curriculum and organisational priorities to be addressed.
- The in-school management team comprises the principal and the deputy principal. The principal, appointed to her post in April 2013, attends to the management and administration of the school in a conscientious manner. She is commended for her cultivation of positive relationships across the school community. The deputy principal ably contributes to the day-to-day operation of the school. The list of duties drawn up for the role of deputy principal should be reviewed so as to prioritise school improvement initiatives.

#### **5. School Self-evaluation**

- The school has begun to engage in school self-evaluation (SSE) and has prepared both a school report and a school improvement plan directing attention towards improved learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, Irish and Science. It is advised that the focus in this school year be confined to literacy and numeracy.
- In order to monitor the implementation of initiatives in SSE all teachers should record targets and actions on SSE in short-term planning documents. This will enable the school to monitor the rate of progress and the success of implementation.

#### **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to develop further in school improvement is good.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

Before the inspection we had endeavoured to improve attendance of pupils. Since the inspection we have met with parents as a group to discuss attendance. We have sent letters every half term to parents to keep them up to date as to how many days their child has been absent. We also discuss the importance of attendance with the students on a regular basis.

We have re-examined the provision for special education and reviewed our timetables and introduced smaller more targeted groups in line with Special Education Circular 02/05. We also hope to introduce more diagnostic testing for those children in need of special education. This is currently under discussion.

## **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 Code of Behaviour and Enrolment Policy have been reviewed by the Board of Management.

In reviewing our English Curriculum Plan we will focus on the children's oral language. This in turn will help improve listening skills for pupils.

We have discussed as a Board of Management a 3 year plan for our school and will be starting to put this in practice this year.

We wish to acknowledge as per findings of the inspection the excellent working relationship with parents in our school, Board of Management and the local community. We thank them for their continued support and help which they give on a voluntary basis.

As a school we acknowledge the inspector's report. We note that our school has scope to continually progress and improve. This we will strive to do within the confines our particular context in terms of pupil teacher and class teacher ratio and available resources.