

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

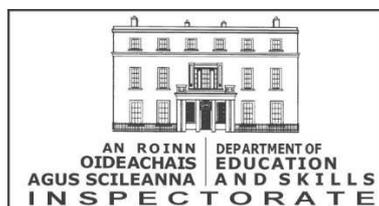
**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning**

REPORT

**Rathmichael Parish National School,
Stonebridge Road, Shankill, Co. Dublin.**

Uimhir rolla: 11873A

Date of inspection: 17 September 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Rathmichael Parish National School, Shankill, Co. Dublin in September 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 and with board and parent representatives, the findings of 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.

Rathmichael Parish National School is a vertical, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough. The attendance levels of the 225 pupils enrolled are very good.

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

- the positive school atmosphere and sense of school community
- the overall high standards of achievement by pupils
- the commendable levels of pupil motivation
- the overall good quality teaching, with some very good practices
- the hard-working teaching staff's willingness to embrace new initiatives in the best interest of pupils' learning
- the effective management and leadership skills of the principal
- the proactive role played by the board of management
- the active support provided by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and the wider parent body

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To optimise pupil learning and to ensure sufficient challenge for all learners, greater use should be made of open ended, skills based learning that promotes higher order engagement.
- There should be an increased focus on the use of assessment data, to guide differentiated programmes of learning.
- More regular, formal meetings of the in-school management team should be facilitated that allow for a greater distribution of leadership and for the monitoring and review of the implementation of school priorities.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are high, and a significant number of pupils are achieving at very high levels. Pupils experience a wide range of curricular and co-curricular experiences and show commendable levels of motivation. In the SESE subjects pupils are acquiring a range of skills and pupils engage commendably with project work. Very good examples of pupils' writing in both English and Irish were evidenced during the evaluation and pupils receive a range of opportunities to write and publish their work. *Déantar dea-obair chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa scoil, agus tá scileanna chumarsáide ar chaighdeán ard ag morán de na daltaí. Good work is done to promote Irish in the school and the communicative skills of many of the pupils are high.* Pupils with additional learning needs are making good progress.
- Many pupils are performing to a high standard in numeracy. To enhance pupils' skills further, regular opportunities should be provided for them to engage in open-ended problem solving and collaborative mathematical engagement.
- In literacy pupils are achieving at very good levels. Commendable focus has been placed on the development of pupils' reading skills through an individualised reading programme. Although many pupils demonstrate good capacity with regard to oral language, there is nonetheless scope to augment their skill and confidence levels. The school has rightly identified oral language as a priority area for development. To aid development, baseline data should be established and specific language functions and higher order skills should be targeted.
- During the evaluation no lessons were evidenced where ICT was used by pupils as a learning tool. The potential of ICT to extend and challenge pupils' learning is not being exploited.
- In order to optimise pupils learning achievements and to ensure that all pupils are provided with sufficient challenge, greater use should be made of creative, open-ended, skills based learning that promotes higher order engagement.

2. Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good practices in evidence during the evaluation. Lessons were well structured and resourced, incorporated a range of methodologies and had clear learning intentions. The very good practices included the communication of high expectations, purposeful collaboration by pupils, and some purposeful use of differentiation. The teaching staff are reflective and hardworking, and embrace new

initiatives in the best interest of pupil learning. Very good use is made of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* by the teachers at the infant level in the school.

- Assessment has been a recent whole-school development focus and some good practices have been implemented. These include the collection of baseline data in some settings, the analysis of standardised tests, the sharing of success criteria and the use of pupil self-assessment. Such practices should be embedded in all settings and an increased focus should be placed on the use of assessment data to guide differentiated programmes of learning.
- There are some notable high quality, purposeful and progressive practices in evidence in special educational needs (SEN) settings and there is significant expertise amongst members of the SEN team. Notwithstanding these positive aspects of provision, the quality of teaching in SEN settings varies considerably. The lack of consistency in practice should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The recent introduction of in-class support is a welcome development and as it is embedded in practice, it should be used to maximise learning through more specific, targeted, needs driven interventions.
- Individual and group learning plans are prepared for pupils who avail of SEN teaching through a very good collaborative process. To build on this good work, there is a need to ensure that targets are sufficiently clear in all instances and the review process is formalised.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is good. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and a strong emphasis is placed on positivity and positive interactions. During the evaluation pupil behaviour was good and classroom interactions were observed to be respectful and courteous. The findings of pupil questionnaires however, suggest that there is a need to clarify further for pupils the expectations around behaviour.
- The weekly assemblies contribute to the positive school climate, foster a sense of community and highlight pupils' individual achievements.
- Pupils have been afforded some opportunities to participate in decision making through the Green Schools Committee and have been surveyed as part of the school's self-evaluation process. Further efforts should be made to give due weight to the voice of pupils in decisions that affect them. In this regard, consideration should be given to the establishment of a student council.
- 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 leadership in the school is commendable and the school is very well managed. The board of management works very effectively and proactively fulfils its regulatory and statutory obligations. Board members are committed to addressing school management tasks and regularly discuss developments in teaching and learning.
- Effective leadership is provided by the principal who has guided the development and implementation of a variety of valuable initiatives. She has a clear vision for learning and places a strong focus on continuing professional development. She has a very good awareness of the strengths and capacity of the staff.
- Members of the in-school management team possess a broad range of skills and carry out assigned duties conscientiously. To optimise the potential of this team, more regular formal meetings to allow for a greater distribution of leadership should be facilitated. The duties of team members should be collaboratively reviewed on an annual basis to reflect the school's evolving priorities.
- The PTA is very well organised, provides very good support to the school and has recently developed effective communication mechanisms with the wider parent body. Its members contribute to policy formation and review. The skills and expertise of parents are used to support learning in both curricular and co-curricular initiatives.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has made a very good start in the process of School Self-Evaluation through an evaluation of provision in literacy. To ensure that school improvement plans impact on pupils' learning outcomes, targets should be very clear and should relate to improvements in pupil learning. The in-school management team should be involved to a greater extent in the monitoring and review of the implementation of school priorities.

Conclusion

Given the commitment of the school's leadership and staff to ongoing improvement, the school's capacity to develop further is very good.

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, Principal and staff members welcome the WSE MLL Report. We are pleased to acknowledge the strengths recognised within the school. Rathmichael has noted the recommendations and plans to implement as many initiatives as seem feasible. We intend to use this report as a guide to planning in the future.

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

- We have set up a '**challenge club**' for some of our students who need stretching and to promote higher order engagement. This includes children from 3rd – 6th classes.
- Teachers have been encouraged to put '**stretching**' ideas into their fortnightly plans and to make better use of open ended questions.
- With the increased emphasis in the school on assessment, we hope to use the findings in future planning in the school e.g. group children according to ability for different subjects – 'Maths Movers' is in place. This should help us differentiate for the pupils.
- More regular formal meetings have begun for the ISM team. We hope to meet three times a term and that these meetings will have a positive influence on the school.
- A '**student council**' has been setup and is run by the Vice-principal. This has students from 5th and 6th classes. It is hoped that the students will have a greater voice in the running of the school.
- WIFI has been installed in the school. We hope to buy tablets to use for group work and team teaching in the school.