Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Whitegate NS,
Whitegate,
Midleton,
Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 11992I

Date of inspection: 16 January 2014
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Whitegate national school in January 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, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a review of a selection of school documents. The school caters for boys and girls and the current enrolment is ninety six pupils. 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 board of management and parents are very supportive of the school.
- The principal is proactive in addressing the needs of the school.
- The teachers are conscientious and make a positive contribution to school life.
- The special needs assistants attend to a variety of cognitive and care needs with a noted diligence and commitment.
- The quality of pupils’ writing and project work is impressive.
- The results from standardised tests in literacy and in numeracy indicate pupils are making good progress.
- Planning in SEN is inclusive and welcomes the involvement of parents.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The very good work in literacy and in numeracy identified in a number of classrooms should be implemented on a whole-school basis.
- A renewed effort to improve the learning in Irish is recommended.
- Further good practices in cooperative teaching and learning should be identified.
- An increased provision for in-class support is recommended.
- Formal meetings of the ISM team should be conducted and duties should be reviewed regularly.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils in this school are good. The results from standardised tests in literacy indicate pupils are making good progress. Pupils are afforded regular opportunities to recite and appreciate rhyme and poetry. In the middle and in the senior classrooms pupils’ skills in oral language are developed productively through regular discussion. Writing skills are nurtured systematically. The quality of pupils’ written work on display in the senior classes, in particular, is praiseworthy. However, standards in penmanship vary throughout the school. A renewed emphasis on the quality of recording would raise standards. The pupils read competently. They have access to a range of reading material in well stocked classroom libraries and through the mobile library service. An increased engagement in free writing and in a variety of writing genre is recommended. Teachers are advised to improve word walls and to celebrate pupils’ writing with displays in classrooms. Teachers are asked to ensure reading material is matched to the ability and interest levels of pupils in Children and Parents Enjoy Reading (CAPER). The overall learning achievement of pupils in numeracy is good. The results from standardised tests indicate pupils are making good progress. Pupils have access to concrete material to aid the learning process. Concepts are linked productively to the pupils’ own experiences. Cooperative learning is exploited effectively though think, pair, share exercises. There is a commendable emphasis on the development of
problem-solving skills. The pupils have regular opportunities to record in copybooks and the standard of presentation is consistently good in some classrooms. This good practice should be extended to all classrooms. In the further development of good mathematical practices teachers are advised to engage in oral/mental mathematical activity for consolidation and revision purposes. Information communication technology is utilised regularly in some classes to complement pupils’ learning.

- **Tá malartacht ag baint le caighdeáin fhoghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge, idir aithriseoireacht, léitheoireacht and scríbhneoireacht. Cothaítear caighdeán cumasach i roinnt áirithe rangsheomraí.**

  The quality of learning in recitation, in reading and in writing in Irish is variable. A competent standard is achieved in some classrooms.

- **Active discovery learning is a feature of very good practice in the senior classes. The pupils’ skills in Science are nurtured effectively through a regular engagement in experiments.**

- **A wide range of tests are utilised to assess pupils. Results are analysed and used productively in allocating additional supports for pupils. A learning profile for each pupil should be documented in each teachers’ assessment folder. Staff is advised to graph the standardised test results and to present these to the board annually.**

2. **Quality of teaching**

- **The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. The teachers have introduced a variety of initiatives such as: CAPER, peer tutoring and the Building Bridges of Understanding programme. A worthy emphasis on developing fluency and comprehension skills is in evidence. A variety of reading responses is encouraged and learning is matched to the ability levels of pupils through differentiated group activity. Cooperative learning activity should be usefully extended to include Literacy-Lift Off.**

- **In progressing the teaching and learning in Mathematics, Mata sa Rang in-service is due to be undertaken by the principal. Team teaching is implemented in numeracy activity with limited success. This practice warrants a more structured approach. Moltar cur chuige scoile uile a cothú chun an caighdeán i múineadh na Gaeilge a fheabhsú.**

  A whole-school approach to the teaching of Irish is recommended to improve standards.

- **A review of all curricular plans is now timely, that will ensure practice and documentation are closely aligned. A review date for each plan should be identified. Staff is advised to develop a greater linkage between the school plan, teachers’ individual planning and the monthly progress records, to ensure a consistency and continuity in curriculum delivery. A school attendance strategy should be documented.**

- **The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Individual education plans (IEP/IPLP) display good structure and detail. Well-defined learning objectives are documented in short-term plans and the progress of pupils is recorded regularly. The IEP/IPLP process is inclusive and welcomes the involvement of parents. The good practice whereby parents receive a copy of the IEP should be extended to include the IPLP and that these would be typed in all cases. A number of worthy initiatives are in place to support pupils, among them, early intervention in infants and the Forward Together programme. It is recommended that greater provision be made for in-class support. The newcomer pupils are making good progress in language development and in social interaction. A language profile should be compiled for each pupil and their progress should be assessed and documented through the Primary School Assessment Kit.**
3. Support for pupils’ well-being

- During the evaluation the pupils were well-mannered and responsive. Pupils’ needs are addressed effectively through a wide range of activities provided during and after school time. The special needs assistants attend to a variety of cognitive and care needs with a noted diligence and commitment. The results from the pupil questionnaires indicate pupils like school, they feel safe and value the input of staff.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, in fundraising and in supporting after-school activity. Communication with parents is very good. A school newsletter is issued weekly and parents are informed on the progress of pupils. The results from the parent questionnaires indicate the majority of parents are positive with regard to aspects of teaching and learning and the care the pupils receive.
- 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 members make an important contribution to school development. The board has been proactive in addressing the development needs of the school. The access and exit of pupils is a concern as there is no external corridor. The board is commended in making funding available for professional development. The principal is proactive in addressing the curricular and organisational needs of the school and has introduced a number of worthy initiatives to progress learning. The in-school management (ISM) team fulfil their duties conscientiously. Management is advised to assign curricular responsibilities in the further development of their instructional leadership roles. Duties should be reviewed regularly and formal meetings of the ISM team should be conducted. A short end of year report on the completion of their management duties should be presented to the board.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged conscientiously with school self-evaluation processes (SSE). A school development file has been assembled with comprehension, mathematical language and problem-solving targeted for further development.

Conclusion

The staff has introduced a number of worthy initiatives over the years to advance teaching and learning. These initiatives now need to be implemented on a whole-school basis to maximise their impact on pupil learning.

Published June 2014
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 Whitegate N.S. welcomes the recent WSE-MLL report and its acknowledgement of the high quality of teaching and learning in our school. We are pleased that the report recognises the many strengths of the school and affirms the dedication and commitment of staff, pupils, parents and management.

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

Since we completed the process of WSE MLL, we have begun the reorganisation of our curricular plans with view to the implementation of identified good practice in Literacy and Numeracy and to further accommodate individual teachers’ Short and Long Term Planning. Tá an-bhéim curtha againn anois ar phleanáil i gcursoí Ghaeilge agus ar dhul chun cinn i modhanna múinte agus i straitéisí nua sa Ghaeilge. A renewed emphasis on planning, on teaching strategies in Irish has taken place.

We will organise our resource and learning support timetables to maximise whole-school cooperative teaching opportunities and to facilitate more in-class support. Parents have received copies of their pupil’s IPLP. A recorded Literacy and Numeracy Strategy now reflects the evidence gathered and subsequent school decisions and selected emphases in place in Literacy and Numeracy and will culminate in the articulation of a School Improvement Plan during the third term. CAPER resources now reflect the interest levels and abilities of the groupings more definitively. The ISM team has held formal meetings, one pre half term and will continue with this practice and will implement all other advice given. The school community welcomes the findings and recommendations of the WSE – MLL as a road map for future school planning and progress.