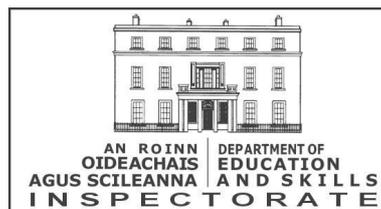


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

**St Joseph's National School
Culleens, Co. Sligo
Uimhir rolla: 121401**

Date of inspection: 28 January 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St Joseph's National School, Culleens, Co. Sligo in January 2014. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in the learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with the board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and review of a selection of school documents. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

St Joseph's N.S. is a two-teacher rural, co-educational school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion. Enrolment in the school is steady with twenty-seven pupils currently on the roll. Attendance of pupils is very good and is carefully monitored.

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

- The overall quality of the work of the board of management is good.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school.
- High expectations of behaviour and achievement are communicated to pupils.
- A breadth of extra-curricular activities, some at national and international level, enhances the pupils' educational provision.
- The principal leads a committed team that uses a broad range of strategies in its approach to teaching.
- Learning outcomes for pupils, overall, including pupils with special educational needs, are very good.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good with some very good practices observed.
- The school self-evaluation process is well advanced and clear targets for improvement have been identified.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- The board of management should appoint a new treasurer and provide for the annual certification of school accounts. A financial statement should be presented at every meeting and an annual report should be published.
- A whole-school approach to teacher planning and monthly record-keeping focusing on pupil learning outcomes should be adopted by staff.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of written work should be enhanced through implementation of a whole-school approach and policy.
- Moltar deiseanna sa bhreis a thabhairt do na daltaí chun a gcumas labhartha sa Ghaeilge a threisiú. *It is recommended that further opportunities be provided to pupils to strengthen their spoken competence in Irish.*

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The pupils' learning achievements overall are very good. They are confident and competent communicators who demonstrate very high levels of engagement and positive attitudes to their work together with independence in learning activities. Structured talk and discussion, language experience charts, stories, novels and shared reading maximise individual outcomes for pupils of different abilities.

- The range and quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is generally of a good standard overall. However, there is a need for greater consistency in approaches to handwriting across the school.
- Pupils have a broad repertoire of poems and songs, in both Irish and English. The new structured and systematic development of pupils' comprehension skills, in line with SSE targets in the senior classes, is producing good outcomes.
- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán. Moltar deiseanna sa bhreis a thabhairt do na daltaí labhairt trí Ghaeilge. B'fhiú a thuilleadh drámaíochta agus róghlacadh a chleachtadh chun a gcumas labhartha a threisiú. Moltar úsáid a bhaint as trialacha caighdeánaithe chun gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a thomhas ó bhliain go bliain. *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good overall. It is recommended that further opportunities be provided to pupils to speak through Irish. Drama and role-play should be practised to strengthen their spoken competence. It is suggested that standardised tests be utilised to measure pupil achievement in Irish from year to year.*
- Achievement in numeracy is good as evidenced by standardised test results. Pupils in most classes displayed good knowledge of number and used mathematical language. Very effective practice was observed in some instances that was characterised by explicit teaching of concepts and skills. The monitoring of pupils' progress during the recently introduced team-teaching approach is advised.
- A range of purposeful assessment procedures support teaching and learning. Formal testing results are communicated to parents in the end of year report. Further engagement with *Assessment for learning* (AfL) approaches would enhance current practice.
- Effective supports are in place for pupils with special educational needs. A staged approach is undertaken together with formal monitoring and recording of specific learning targets as set out in individual education plans.

2. Quality of teaching

- Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is very good. Print-rich, attractive and stimulating learning environments in classrooms and in support settings are provided.
- Teachers match learning tasks to pupil ability. Project-based approaches, structured play, station teaching, pair work and cooperative group work are used to good effect in mainstream classrooms.
- Emphasis is placed on the use of information and communication technologies to support teaching and learning.
- Extensive planning is effected by teachers to ensure that pupils are fully participant in their learning. A whole-school approach to short-term planning and monthly record-keeping, ensuring consistent reference to pupil outcomes and curriculum objectives, should be implemented by teachers.

3. Support for pupils' wellbeing

- The relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive and respectful. Senior pupils draw up an annual charter of behaviour. Pupil behaviour is exemplary and teachers show a very high level of commitment to them.
- In their responses to questionnaires, all pupils reported that they like the school and feel safe in the classroom and in the playground.
- Care and attention is given to the needs of pupils by two shared learning support teachers. They plan and collaborate effectively together and with the mainstream class teachers.
- Very good relations have been established with parents. They, in turn, are very appreciative of the work of the school, as indicated by their responses to questionnaires.
- DEIS funds and supports are effectively utilised to enable all pupils to fully participate in a range of educational programmes.
- Evidence was provided to confirm that the school is compliant with child protection requirements.

4. Leadership and Management

- The board of management actively supports the development of the school. School accommodation, playground facilities and resources are of a high standard and are very well maintained. The chairperson is a frequent visitor to the school and is very supportive of staff. School funds are carefully managed. Following the resignation, it is timely that the board appoints a new treasurer. It should also discuss a statement of school accounts per meeting and ensure annual certification. The board of management is commended for supporting the continuing professional development of staff.
- The principal provides effective leadership and shares her vision for ongoing improvement of the school with the school community. The special duties post-holder earnestly carries out a number of tasks. The board should appraise in-school management posts on a regular basis and ensure shared and cyclical review of documentation. It is recommended that the frequent and informal meetings of the in-school management team be formalised.
- The newly affiliated parents' association is strengthening links with the general parent body and plans to assist and support the work of the school. A school website is in the process of establishment. This should further enhance communication among the school community.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school's engagement with the school self-evaluation process is very good. Comprehension and grammar in literacy have been prioritised as areas for development. A range of evidence has resulted in the formulation of an improvement plan. It is advised that the SSE process be more devolved to the school community and that target dates, responsibilities and roles be more clearly defined.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good, given its engagement to date with SSE, together with the vision, skills and leadership of the principal and the commitment of the teaching staff.