

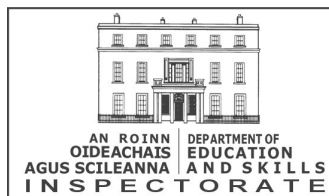
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

The Old Borough National School
Swords, County Dublin
Roll number: 12358M

Date of inspection: 27 January 2016



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in The Old Borough National School in January 2016. 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 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.

The Old Borough National School caters for 105 boys and girls from junior infants to sixth class. The school is presented as a stimulating and orderly learning environment. It is under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The school principal, management and staff work successfully in a collaborative and committed manner to promote an inclusive and efficient school.
- A strong, nurturing work-ethic permeates the school, where all staff has high expectations of pupils and their abilities to progress across various curricular fields.
- Teachers prepare carefully for their work, with notable provision for resources and lesson activities. While teachers' overall planning is very clear on content, with many examples of high-quality daily planning also in evidence, there is some variety in the quality and scope of short-term plans.
- The quality of pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy is very good. While pupils display strong numerical skills, there is potential, in some instances, to further extend the challenges for more able pupils in this area.
- Tá dul chun cinn maith á dhéanamh ag na daltaí sa Ghaeilge. Léiríonn siad cumas ina gcuid scríbhneoireachta, go háirithe sa scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil. Is féidir breis béime a chur ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil agus ar shaorscríbhneoireacht. *Pupils are making good progress in Irish. They show capability in their writing, especially functional writing. Additional emphasis should be placed on informal conversation and on creative writing.*
- Pupils present as very content in this school environment, applying themselves to their learning with vigour and focus.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is delivered in a focused, affirming and engaging manner.
- The parent-teacher association and ancillary staff provide valuable support for the school.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- The school should develop a common approach to short-term planning. Such a development should also examine short-term planning opportunities for cognitive applied language proficiency (CALP) and the use of drama as a methodology across the curriculum.
- Cé go bhfuil sé le sonrú i gcuid de na ranganna, is féidir níos mó béime a chur ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil sa Ghaeilge tríd an scoil, chun níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí briathra, foclóir agus réamhfhocail a chleachtadh. Moltar freisin béim sa bhreis a chur ar shaorscríbhneoireacht. *While it can be identified in some classes, additional emphasis should*

be placed on informal conversation in Irish across the school, to provide pupils with more opportunities to practice verbs, vocabulary and prepositions. It is also recommended that additional emphasis be placed on creative writing.

- The school should examine additional opportunities for differentiating Mathematics lessons to cater for more able pupils.
- The current deployment of a learning-support teacher to deliver mainstream classroom instruction is in breach of Circular 02/2005; the matter should be addressed by the school without undue delay.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good. A strong work-ethic permeates the school, where staff has high expectations of pupils and their abilities to progress across various curricular fields. As a result, pupils apply themselves to learning tasks in an earnest and motivated manner. They reveal a keen interest in their work and learning and are making systematic progress. Assessment data, work samples and their performance in various learning tasks indicate a progressive development of skills and concepts.
- The overall quality of pupil learning in Mathematics is very good. Appropriate emphasis is placed on number knowledge. Content and concepts are effectively linked to the pupils' life experience and environment. Concrete resources, discussion and cooperative learning are gainfully employed, providing pupils with practical mathematical experiences and opportunities to interrogate concepts. Pupils' problem-solving skills are being developed effectively. There is some potential for the further development of the school as a mathematics rich environment, for greater differentiation for more able pupils and for pupils to design problems. Creative approaches to the development of mathematical competencies are also in place, such as involvement in the *Junior Entrepreneur Programme* and its credit union savings scheme.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is very good. Suitable approaches are in place to develop word-attack and phonological skills. The school is commended for the deliberate and systemic planning in place for developing comprehension skills. Pupils read very well and display a keen interest in literature of both a factual and fictional nature. Very good provision is in place for the development of oral language skills, with commendable teacher use of higher-order questioning and pupil discussion. Pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to write in various genres. They display a keen interest in writing, doing so in a very competent manner. Pupils' handwriting and work presentation are of a very good quality. In some cases, there is potential for the more specific delineation of cognitive applied language proficiency (CALP) in teachers' planning and for the wider recording and celebration of oral language across the curriculum.
- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Baineann na hoidí úsáid chruthaitheach agus éifeachtach as modhanna agus fearais éagsúla chun na daltaí a mhealladh chun cainte. I gcásanna áirithe, úsáidtear modh an aistriúcháin; moltar é sin a sheachaint. Labhraíonn na daltaí go hábailta faoi théamaí agus faoi thopaicí áirithe agus léiríonn siad saibhreas foclóra ina gcuid cainte. Is féidir leo ceisteanna a fhreagairt agus a chur gan stró. Scríobhann na daltaí go toilteanach agus go cumasach sa Ghaeilge. I gcásanna áirithe, moltar níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí sa saorscríbhneoireacht. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí ar léibhéal ard. I gcásanna áirithe, baineann oidí sár-úsáid as comhrá neamhfhoirmiúil chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Moltar go roinnfí an dea-chleachtas sin tríd an scoil agus go gcuirfí níos mó béime ar an ngné sin den fhoghlam.

The standard of learning in Irish is good. Teachers make creative and effective use of various methods and resources to encourage the pupils to speak. In certain instances, the translation method is used; this should be avoided. Pupils speak capably about various themes and topics and they reveal vocabulary richness in their conversation. They can ask and respond to

questions without difficulty. The pupils write willingly and capably in Irish. In certain instances, it is recommended that additional opportunities be provided for pupils in creative writing. Pupils' reading skills are of a high standard. In some instances, teachers make excellent use of informal Irish to teach the language. It is recommended that such good practice be shared throughout the school and that additional emphasis be placed on that aspect of the learning.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well structured and paced, being delivered in a lively and engaging manner. Teachers' preparation for their work is of a high quality. Resources are used purposefully, with some very creative examples of teacher-designed resources in evidence. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of methodologies. Overall, teacher planning is of a good quality, with teachers making very commendable use of daily plans. It is recommended that a common approach to short-term planning be established. In some cases, short-term plans should make greater provision for differentiation, CALP language and drama as a methodology.
- Assessment practices are of a good quality. In particular, the monitoring of pupils' application to tasks and the correction of pupils' written work is of a notably high standard. Pupil self-evaluation could be further extended.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is high. The school adopts a collaborative approach to identifying and providing for pupils with special educational needs. Such provision is underpinned by clear, progressive and purposeful planning. Support sessions are skilfully delivered with well-organised, progressively designed and focused activities at their core. Pupils clearly enjoy these sessions, being regularly affirmed in their work. Interventions and support sessions combine both withdrawal and in-class support paradigms. The school should consider extending the many positive features of its recent development of station teaching and group support teaching in infant classes to higher class levels. The current deployment of a learning-support teacher to deliver mainstream classroom instruction is in breach of Circular 02/2005; the matter should be addressed by the school without undue delay.

3. Support for pupils' wellbeing

- Pupil wellbeing is a high priority for the school. It is proactive and successful in providing a nurturing and positive learning experience for pupils. To this end, it is focused on offering pupils a holistic education with access to a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils' happiness is closely monitored and every effort is made to affirm them in their work and play. Within this ordered and well-structured learning environment, they present as content learners.
- 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 school is well managed by the board of management. Its priorities include the effective management of resources, financial, human and physical, and the promotion of an inclusive, holistic and efficiently operating learning environment.
- The principal is successfully proactive in developing an inclusive and nurturing environment where both staff and pupils are happy and rewarded in their work. She is interested in the progress of all pupils, and in empowering staff to undertake their teaching duties in a committed manner.

- The in-school management team works collaboratively and deliberately to foster school improvement at organisational, pastoral and curricular levels. It is recommended that, in the next review of duties, more specific provision is made for curricular leadership within the area of numeracy.
- In responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, a very high proportion of parents indicated that they are happy with the school. Pupils' responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicated that a very high proportion of them think that their teacher talks to them about how to improve their work.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged in a wide range of self-evaluation practices. School improvement plans in the fields of numeracy and literacy show a clear roadmap for development in these areas.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good. Staff is very committed to the school and interested in providing a quality education for their pupils.