

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**St. Joseph's National School
Ballingarry, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla: 13210I**

Date of inspection: 20 March 2015



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 in March 2015. 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 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.

St. Joseph's National School is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emlly. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme (DEIS), Rural. Staff include three mainstream class teachers, a shared learning support-teacher, who is based in the school, and a shared resource teacher. There are currently seventy nine pupils enrolled and attendance levels are very good.

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

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including those with additional learning needs, are very good.
- Teaching is of a high standard throughout the school.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good.
- School management and teachers promote and encourage good quality relationships with parents and with the wider community.
- The parents' association works diligently to support school activities.
- The board of management successfully supports the school's ongoing development.
- The principal's work is of a high standard and she has progressed aspects of teaching and learning resulting in improved outcomes in pupil achievement.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Chun breis dhul chun cinn a dhéanamh ar thorthaí foghlama sa Ghaeilge, ní mór do na h-oidí cumas labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt agus a gcuid múiníne a chothú. *In order to improve further learning outcomes in Irish, the teachers should focus on developing the pupils' oral competence and confidence.*
- All teachers should prepare short-term plans in accordance with Rule 126 of the Rules for National Schools.
- The board should ensure that school accounts are certified annually in accordance with section 18.1 of the Education Act 1998.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including those with additional learning needs, are very good. Most pupils express themselves in a confident articulate manner. They are keen to describe and to demonstrate their learning. Attainment in English literacy continues to improve in response to the implementation of whole-school interventions which focus on vocabulary and comprehension. The school's consistent work in this regard is praised. Reading material is differentiated for every pupil and they achieve at good standard of reading. Many pupils produce writing of a commendable quality in a range of genres. To build on existing good practice in

writing, it is advised that infant pupils be introduced to free writing at the earliest opportunity.

I gcoitinne, tá gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Cé go gcuireann roinnt daltaí iad féin in iúl go cumasach, léiríonn daltaí eile easpa múiníne in úsáid na teanga. Chun breis dhul chun cinn a dhéanamh ar thorthaí foghlama sa Ghaeilge, ní mór do na h-oidí cumas labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt agus a gcuid múiníne a chothú. B'fhiú go mór réimse níos leithne ábhair léitheoireachta, úrscéalta san áireamh, a úsáid. *Overall pupil achievement in Irish is of a good standard. While some pupils express themselves competently, others lack confidence in using the language. In order to improve further learning outcomes in Irish, the teachers should focus on developing the pupils' oral competence and confidence. The introduction of a broader range of reading material, including novels in Irish, is advised.*

- The pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the concepts being taught and whole-school attainment in Mathematics is good. A majority of pupils expressed the view that they think they are doing well at Maths.
- The pupils benefit from the range of co-curricular activities provided for them in Music, Physical Education and Science. The provision of a school garden has enabled them to engage in some practical outdoor activities. There is scope to develop the use of this outdoor classroom.
- In the responses to questionnaires most pupils stated that they enjoy their lessons and learning.

2. Quality of teaching

- Teaching is of a high standard throughout the school and there is a strong commitment to continuous professional development amongst the staff. Stimulating learning environments are created, resources are plentiful and classrooms are both print and number rich.
- Teachers present well-structured lessons which are supported by a range of teaching methodologies and resources. In compliance with Rule 126 of the Rules for National Schools, all teachers should prepare short-term plans on a fortnightly basis and discontinue the practice of monthly preparation of plans. Short-term planning should, in some instances, outline differentiation and assessment practices more clearly.
- The level of support for pupils with additional learning needs is highly praised. Support is provided on a withdrawal basis and as part of a carefully planned programme of in-class support. Lessons are very well structured and delivered in a supportive, encouraging environment. Pupil attainment is tracked systematically and there is evidence to indicate that the implementation of the *Reading Recovery Programme* is of particular benefit to pupils.
- Assessment practices have been recently developed and improved with more frequent assessment of learning in all classrooms and with more regular communication of attainment with parents. It is advised that pupil self-assessment strategies be introduced so as to encourage the pupils to reflect upon and to direct their own learning.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. The pupils are managed effectively and a caring, respectful and inclusive school atmosphere is fostered. Good work habits are successfully established among the pupils.

- School management and teachers promote and encourage good quality relationships with parents and with the wider community. The parents' association works diligently to support school activities through fund-raising and the organisation of a variety of school-related activities. All parents are invited to participate in a range of adult courses offered throughout the school year. Responses to questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with school management and with the quality of teaching.

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 successfully supports the school's ongoing development. In recent years the board has focussed on developing and improving the building and school grounds. Resources, including information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support teaching and learning, have also been improved. The board deals with policy issues carefully and it endorses school self-evaluation. While financial reports are presented at board meetings, it is recommended that school accounts be certified annually in accordance with section 18.1 of the Education Act 1998.
- The principal's work is of a high standard. She fulfils her responsibilities effectively and competently. In co-operation with the teachers she has progressed aspects of teaching and learning resulting in improved outcomes in pupil achievement. She is successful in building and sustaining good quality relationships with the school community. She is ably assisted by the members of the in-school management team who fulfil their assigned duties capably. In order to develop the potential of in-school management, it is advised that post-holder duties and attendant responsibilities be reviewed regularly to reflect the changing needs of the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school is engaging successfully in school self-evaluation (SSE) of literacy and numeracy using evidence collated from pupils, parents, analysis of standardised tests as well as teacher reflections and observations. A number of initiatives to progress pupil achievement in literacy are prioritised. More recently, initiatives to improve pupil attainment in numeracy have been considered. In order to optimise the impact of the SSE process, the identification of more specific measurable targets and a mechanism to evaluate the impact on pupil learning, is advised.

Conclusion

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 of St Joseph's National School is very pleased that this report affirms the dedication, hard work and commitment of the staff and the wider school community.

We welcome the recognition that the school is functioning very effectively and that overall learning achievements of all pupils are very good.

We are particularly pleased that the report recognised our warm, nurturing school climate that the quality of teaching is high and that our pupils have pride and interest in their learning.

The Board congratulates the principal and all members of staff and also commends the members of the parents Association for their continued work and support.

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 Board of Management accepts the findings of the report. All recommendations will be implemented in the new school year 2015/2016.