

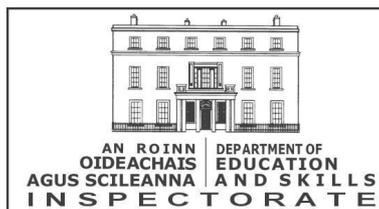
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**St. Luke's Mixed National School**  
**O Mahoney's Avenue, Cork**  
**Uimhir rolla: 13648D**

**Date of inspection: 02 February 2015**



## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St Luke's Mixed National School in February 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

St Luke's Mixed National School is under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. The current enrolment of the school is eighty-two pupils. Overall enrolment trends are positive, and, in the majority of instances, attendance levels are very high.

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

- The school has a clear and distinct ethos which reflects and supports the traditions of the community it serves.
- The school is managed efficiently.
- Leadership capacity in the school is very good and practices are very effective.
- The professionalism of teachers is a significant factor in the achievement and maintenance of very satisfactory overall standards of pupil achievement.
- The safety and welfare of pupils is afforded a high priority in the school.

The following areas **require improvement**:

- D'fhéadfaí an cur chuige cumarsáideach i bhfoghlaím teangacha a fhorbairt a thuilleadh sa Gaeilge. The communicative approach to language-learning should be further developed in Irish.
- An extension of the writing opportunities for pupils incorporating a wider variety of writing genres and activities as well as more systematic exposure to models of good writing would benefit pupils.
- The use of historical timelines is recommended.
- The advantages of further developing pupil learning and retention skills through more structured collaborative work in specific areas of the curriculum should be discussed at a whole-school level.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- In general, the learning achievements of pupils are very good. This is enabled by good curriculum provision, age-appropriate learning methods and supported by regular dialogue with parents. Quantitative assessment data, based on standardised test results in reading and in mathematics achievement, indicates

satisfactory standards in line with, and, in some instances, above normal expectations. Formative assessment practices, such as, school assessment profiles and classroom based assessment observations are also reliable indicators of good practice and standards of achievement.

## **2. The quality of teaching**

- The current teaching staff of St Luke's make a significant contribution to the achievement of and maintenance of satisfactory overall standards of pupil attainment. All staff members display a sound pedagogical knowledge and an understanding of the varying developmental stages of the pupils in their care. Many engage in regular continuous development opportunities and their combined talents and experiences provide an excellent resource for teaching and learning. In a twenty-seven item questionnaire issued to all parents almost all respondents agreed with the statement, '*Teaching is good in the school*'.
- Observed lessons had measurable objectives set at a suitable level of challenge and included appropriate pupil engagement strategies. Teacher preparedness for lessons was very good and in all classrooms, high expectations with respect to pupil work, behaviour and effort were evident. The school learning environment is very well regulated and through daily rituals, routines and practices, conformity is promoted, good working habits are developed and the ethos of the school is, regularly, reinforced.
- At a whole school level, agreed conclusions have been drawn about programmes of work and practices have been aligned, in some instances, to available textbooks in order to regulate provision and to promote continuity and development across the classes. Though some risks can result from an over-dependence on textbooks no adverse effects were noted at the time of the evaluation.
- In order to further develop pedagogical practices the following actions should be considered for discussion, and, where possible, implementation. For example, the development of an environment in which the communicative aspect of Irish is promoted, more systematically, and, the use of standardised tests in Irish is recommended. The use of historical timelines is recommended in order to further develop pupils' understanding of time and chronology, change and continuity and cause and effect. An extension of the writing opportunities for pupils incorporating a wider variety of writing genres and activities as well as more systematic exposure to models of good writing would be beneficial. At a general level, the promotion of dialogue around the optimum use of textbooks as a key resource for curriculum planning and the development of school policy with regard to the most effective application of technology as a teaching resource would be helpful.

## **3. How well pupils are cared for and supported**

- The school board and staff take full responsibility for the safety and welfare of all of the pupils in their care. To that end, many policies and practices have been developed that meet the developmental needs of pupils and which regulate the learning environment for them. Though the school location and environment offers many specific challenges, pupils are managed very well. Under the leadership of the principal, individual teachers model good practice with respect to work habits and behaviour which relate to the family, social backgrounds and experiences of the pupils in their care. The excellent behaviour, courtesy and good manners of all pupils was a striking feature of the evaluation.
- Pupils with specific educational needs make good progress and good supports are in place for them. In general, across the classes, there is a consistent focus on identifying and eliminating common errors in pupils' written work, and, through

positive encouragement from the staff, improvements in learning are enabled. Parents are, regularly, given good quality information on their children's progress.

- A twenty-one item questionnaire was issued to all pupils from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class and from these results it is obvious that pupils are, generally, very positive about life in their school.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification.

#### **4. Leadership and management**

- The management practices of the board support the establishment of a guiding mission for the school within its unique community. Policies are, generally, clear and unambiguous statements of practice and reflect the history and traditions of the school. Though whole-school administrative and curricular planning is very comprehensive and detailed, a number of minor inconsistencies were noted, with respect to the school's policy on attendance. These will require review in order to promote consistency of attendance for all. Notwithstanding that, daily practices are regulated very efficiently to promote ethical standards and support organisational values. The school is well resourced and all available spaces are well developed and carefully maintained. In line with its function, the board maintains a high level of compliance with Departmental regulations and guidelines and portrays a well-developed understanding of the legal framework in which school boards operate. Channels of communication are also reasonably well developed, and, in the parents' questionnaire, all respondents agreed with the statement, '*Overall I am happy with the school*'. Notwithstanding that, a significant minority of respondents would like to be included more regularly in discussions about all school matters and the board is advised to include, where relevant, the voice of parents. At the time of the evaluation a very effective parents' association, with a clearly defined role, was contributing positively to school life.
- The principal attends to her role as lead learner within the school community with committed enthusiasm. Her vision for the school is clear and she has gained the trust of her colleagues and the wider school community. She promotes a culture which values effort and achievement and which promotes teamwork and collegiality. She is a very effective leader and also manages the day to day activities of the school very successfully.
- The deputy principal provides invaluable assistance to the principal, within the terms of her formal role, in a wide variety of areas in line with the current pastoral, administrative and curricular needs of the school.
- All other staff members are complimented for their commitment to the school which is evidenced in their work practices as well as in their participation in, and, management of, a variety of extracurricular activities in support of the agreed educational vision of St. Luke's.

#### **5. School self-evaluation**

The process of self-evaluation is well advanced in this school and positive interventions have occurred to support numeracy and literacy development. Under the school self-evaluation initiative, the staff plan to improve pupil physical activity practices. The development of simple measurements which endeavour to devise a developmental continuum based on expected targets is a welcome additional tool for assessment. These will provide, in due course, progress maps for pupils with appropriate performance targets and should be introduced, where possible, in other curricular areas.

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