

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

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

REPORT

**Howth Road Mixed National School
Howth Road, Clontarf, Dublin 3
Uimhir rolla: 13815T**

Date of inspection: 27 April 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Howth Road Mixed National School in April 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 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.

Howth Road Mixed National School is a five-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school with a current enrolment of ninety-six pupils. The school operates under the patronage of the Session of Clontarf and Scots Presbyterian Church. Pupils' attendance levels are very good.

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

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are of a very good standard.
- Results of standardised assessments in English reading and Mathematics indicate very good levels of attainment for most pupils.
- Lessons are interesting, well-paced and facilitate pupils' active and collaborative engagement.
- The pupils experience an inclusive, respectful and encouraging learning environment, and support for their well-being is of a very good quality.
- Parents are very supportive and are involved in many aspects of school life.
- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school.
- The leadership of the principal is focused, positive and enthusiastic.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that teachers' short-term planning in all settings should include more specific learning objectives and expected learning outcomes.
- A whole-school approach to the recording of monthly progress records should be devised to facilitate more detailed recording and monitoring of curriculum implementation.
- Tá scóip chun forbartha i ngnéithe de mhúineadh na Gaeilge. B'fhiú do na hoidí na trí thréimhse cumarsáide a chur i bhfeidhm i gceachtanna chun caighdeán cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. *There is scope for development in aspects of the teaching of Irish. Teachers should implement the three phases of communication in lessons to develop pupils' oral language skills.*
- The implementation of a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment of and for learning is recommended. Assessment outcomes should be used to guide the school's approach to differentiation.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are of a very good standard. Pupils participate purposefully and enthusiastically in learning activities. Many opportunities have been provided for pupils to participate in collaborative project-based activities across a number of curriculum areas; this work is of a very high standard. Results of standardised assessments in English reading and Mathematics indicate very good levels of attainment for most pupils.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in literacy is very good. Pupils are articulate and confident communicators. Most pupils read accurately and fluently. Well-stocked classroom libraries foster the pupils' enthusiasm for reading. A variety of differentiated

reading material is required to extend pupils' reading experiences. The standard of pupils' handwriting and presentation of written work is very good. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in process writing in a variety of genres; pupils have opportunities to write poetry and this work is of a particularly good standard. Cé go léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint chuí ar ábhar na gceachtanna Gaeilge, sonraítear easpa muiníne agus cumais sa Ghaeilge labhartha. Moltar plean céimnithe uile-scoile a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm do labhairt na Gaeilge. *Although pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of the content of Irish lessons, a lack of confidence and capacity is noticeable in their spoken Irish. It is recommended that an incremental whole-school plan for oral Irish be devised and implemented.*

- The overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes in Mathematics is very good. Many pupils display confidence and competence with regard to the use of a broad range of specific problem-solving strategies. Explicit attention should be paid to linking mathematical content to pupils' own life experiences.
- Provision in arts education is a significant strength of the school. Pupils sing tunefully and the highly commendable performances observed indicate very good levels of understanding and appreciation of the specific elements of music. High-quality pupil achievement is in evidence in Visual Arts. Pupils' works, using a range of techniques and media, are displayed in a very attractive and stimulating manner throughout the school.
- Pupils demonstrate mastery of a range of skills and knowledge in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. Very effective use is made of the school and local environment to extend learning experiences.
- Pupils with special educational needs are making very good progress in accordance with their ability. Engagement levels were very good during observed lessons in the support settings.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is commendable. In general, lessons are interesting, well paced and facilitate pupils' active and collaborative engagement. The teachers' communication and questioning skills were very effective during observed lessons, with many examples of higher-order questioning employed to develop pupils' responses. Individual classrooms are well organised, bright and attractive, and are very well developed as print-rich and number-rich learning environments.
- There is scope to improve the quality of teachers' individual classroom planning. It is necessary to ensure that teachers' individual planning is tailored to the specific class context and learning needs of the pupils. It is recommended that teachers' short-term planning in all settings should include more specific learning objectives and expected learning outcomes. A whole-school approach to the recording of monthly progress records should be devised to facilitate more detailed recording and monitoring of curriculum implementation.
- Tá scóip chun forbartha i ngnéithe de mhúineadh na Gaeilge. Tá béim fhiúntach curtha ar úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil sa scoil. Tá eilimintí d'aistriúchán sa teagasc le sonrú le linn ceachtanna Gaeilge; moltar an cleachtas seo a sheachaint. B'fhiú do na hoidí na trí thréimhse cumarsáide a chur i bhfeidhm i gceachtanna chun caighdeán cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. *There is scope for development in aspects of the teaching of Irish. A worthwhile emphasis has been placed on using Irish informally throughout the school. It is noted that there are some elements of translation in the teaching during Irish lessons; it is recommended that this practice be avoided. Teachers should implement the three phases of communication in lessons to develop pupils' oral language skills.*
- There is some scope for development in the school's approach to assessment. Pupils' written work is monitored regularly and positive evaluative comments are provided by the teacher. It is very commendable that trends in pupils' attainment in standardised tests are reviewed and discussed at whole-school level. There is variation in the range and quality of assessment practices and in the use of assessment data to inform programmes of work. The implementation of a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment of and for learning is recommended. Assessment outcomes should be used to guide the school's approach to differentiation.

- Teaching in support settings is effective and affirming. A range of teaching methodologies and appropriate resources is used to good effect. The individual education plan (IEP) process facilitates the involvement of teachers and parents in identifying and planning for pupils' priority needs. The school is advised to ensure that learning targets in IEPs are specific and measurable, and that short-term planning and progress records correspond with the IEPs and outline how these targets are incrementally achieved. The use of a more comprehensive range of screening and diagnostic tests to contribute to the setting, implementation and reviewing of these targets is advised. Close collaboration between the teachers and special needs assistants makes a valuable contribution to the welfare and inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The pupils experience an inclusive, respectful and encouraging learning environment, and support for their well-being is of a very good quality. During the evaluation, pupils were well behaved, enthusiastic and courteous. In the questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, a significant majority of pupils agreed that they like this school and that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Pupils' participation in whole-school decision making is facilitated through the work of the Green Schools' and Active Flag committees.
- Home-school communication is open and effective and is supported by regular newsletters and a very informative website. Parents are very supportive and are involved in many aspects of school life. In the questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that the school is well run. The parents' association makes a positive contribution to school life. It should consider affiliation to the National Parents' Council (Primary).
- 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 quality of leadership and management is very good. The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school. School accounts are certified annually. The board has been proactive in seeking to ensure that pupils have access to school accommodation which is fully appropriate to meeting their needs. A part-time classroom assistant and external music tutor, funded by the board, are employed at the school. It is commendable that an action plan has been drawn up to facilitate the ongoing development of school policies. Regular consultation with parents in the review of school policies is advised. It is advised that all school plans and policies be signed on ratification and include a date for review.
- The leadership of the principal is focused, positive and enthusiastic. She leads and manages the whole-school planning and development process to good effect. The principal is well supported by the deputy principal who undertakes a broad range of duties with care and diligence. Members of staff are confident in contributing ideas and making suggestions for improvement, resulting in very collaborative working relationships.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged meaningfully in school self-evaluation. Strengths and areas for development have been identified. A school improvement plan has been prepared and appropriate targets have been identified to enhance pupils' learning in a range of curricular areas.
- It is advised that teachers document progress towards improvement targets in short-term planning in order to monitor the on-going implementation of the agreed actions.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good.

Published September 2015

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 welcomes the content of the report and considers it both well-balanced and comprehensive. The report clearly acknowledges the unique culture of the school and addresses all the partners in education: Board, teachers, staff, students and parents.

The Board also acknowledges that all the recommendations made in the report are completely in line with the school's own improvement plan.

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 main recommendations will be addressed as follows:

- Teachers will complete short-term planning using additional specific objectives across all subjects for 2015/16
- A new approach to Cúntas Míósúil has been adopted from September 2015 showing further detail.
- Tógadh lá phleanáil leis na múinteoirí chun na trí thréimse chumarsáide a chur i bhfeidhm i bpleanáil na cheachtanna.
- A new policy on the teaching of Irish will be developed over the next school year.
- A whole-school approach to assessment has been drafted for ratification at Board level.