An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Castletownroche NS,
Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 14107U

Date of inspection: 29 January 2016
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Castletownroche National School (NS) 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 acting principal, acting deputy principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires and a selection of school documents. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board’s response is submitted below.

Castletownroche NS, under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne is a co-educational, vertical primary school. There are three mainstream class teachers in the school, two of whom were not employed in a permanent capacity at the time of the evaluation. The school has one learning support/resource teacher. Attendance levels of the seventy pupils enrolled are generally good. At the time of the evaluation both the principal and deputy principal were in acting roles.

The evaluation has found:

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils in literacy and numeracy are good.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá gnóthachtáil formhór na ndaltaí faoi bhun ionchais an churaclaim don abhár. In Irish, the learning achievements of many pupils are below curriculum expectations for the subject.
- The overall quality of teaching is good with the quality of lessons observed ranging from fair to very good.
- The school should place renewed emphasis on the teaching of tables and link learning in Mathematics more explicitly to the pupils’ own environment.
- The board of management is committed to meeting the educational needs of the pupils and to the development of school facilities.
- The acting principal discharges her administrative duties competently and works hard to provide a safe and happy learning environment for the pupils.
- Pupils present as co-operative and well behaved.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Ní mór ionchais na ndaltaí mar a bhaineann le foghlaim na Gaeilge a árdú agus clár teanga, le spriocanna foghlama soiléire do gach rang leibhéal, a aontú agus a chur i bhfeidhm. Expectations in relation to the pupils’ learning of Irish should be raised and a core language programme with clear targets for each class level be agreed and implemented.
- A range of assessment approaches should be agreed and implemented across the school and the outcomes of assessment should be used to inform differentiated approaches to teaching.
- Collaborative group work should be used more frequently as a teaching methodology.
- The staged approach to providing support for individual pupils, as outlined in Department Circular 02/05, should be implemented fully.
- School accounts should be certified annually in accordance with the requirements under Section 18 of the Education Act.
- The board of management should establish a process through which parents’ perspectives can be incorporated into policy formulation.
- Home-school communication should be improved though use of periodic newsletters and by further development of the school’s website.
Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils
   - The overall learning achievements of the pupils are good. Most demonstrated good levels of engagement and co-operation in the lessons observed.
   - In English, overall attainment is good. Many pupils exhibit good oral language capacity and, in infant classes, the pupils show good levels of skill in emergent literacy. While differentiated reading material is provided to these pupils, it is essential that the level be closely matched to the pupils’ ability in order to provide successful reading experiences for all pupils. An appropriate range of writing genres is addressed throughout the school.
   - Many pupils are making good progress in Mathematics. They are supported in their learning by the use of concrete materials and maths trails and by a focus on the development of their mathematical language. The school should place renewed emphasis on the teaching of tables. An increased emphasis on oral and mental maths, with pupils verbalising the process through which they arrive at mathematical solutions, would further enhance the quality of provision in this area. Further focus on Time would be beneficial in some classes.
   - Sa Ghaeilge, tá gnóthachtáil formhór na ndaltaí faoi bhun ionchais an churaclaim don abháir. Ní mór ionchais na ndaltaí mar a bhaineann le foghlaim na Gaeilge a árdú agus clár teanga, le spriocanna foghlama soliéire do gach rang leibhéal, a aontú agus a chara i bhfeidhm. Ní mór deiseanna struchtúrtha a cur ar fáil do na daltaí, le linn gach ceachtá, chun cur ar a gcumas an teanga a labhairt. Ba chóir deiseanna breise a thabhairt dóibh, freisin, scribhíodh go cruthaitheach i nGaeilge, de réir mar a théann siad chun cinn sa scoil. In Irish, the learning achievements of many pupils are below curriculum expectations for the subject. It is recommended that expectations in relation to the pupils’ learning of Irish be raised and a core language programme with clear targets for each class level be agreed and implemented. The pupils should be provided with structured opportunities to speak the language during every Irish lesson, as well as increasing opportunities to write creatively in Irish as they progress through the school.
   - The pupils enjoy their learning in Music and instrumental play is actively promoted.

2. Quality of teaching
   - The overall quality of teaching is good with the quality of lessons observed ranging from fair to very good. Attractive learning environments and positive atmospheres are cultivated in all classrooms. While provision for differentiation was noted in some lessons, it is recommended that differentiated teaching be prioritised for further development on a whole-school basis. Collaborative group work should be used more frequently as a teaching methodology.
   - The quality of teaching observed for pupils with additional learning needs was good. Individual education plans (IEPs) are prepared consistently for pupils in receipt of support. Diagnostic assessment data should be used to inform target setting in IEPs. The staged approach to providing support for individual pupils, as outlined in Department Circular 02/05, should be implemented fully.
   - While information on pupil achievement is collated at whole-school level, this data is underused. Scope for development in assessment practices was noted throughout the school. The selection of pupils for provision of additional support should be informed consistently by the outcomes of class-based and school-based assessments, and the focus of interventions should be reviewed frequently.

3. Support for pupils’ well-being
   - The management of pupils was observed to be good. They present as co-operative and well behaved. In their questionnaire responses, the majority of pupils surveyed indicated that they consider that they are doing well at reading and Maths. Most pupils agreed that they get on well with other children in the school and almost all agreed that they liked school.
   - The parents’ association are active in fundraising for the school and provide valuable financial support to fund resources and activities for the pupils. They do not currently play a role in organisational policy formulation or review. The board should establish a process through which parents’ perspectives can be incorporated into policy formulation.
• Members of the school community report that there have been recent improvements in the overall quality of communication. In order to support and to build upon this improvement, it is advised that members of the board of management and members of the parents’ association engage in training for their respective roles. They should also agree on the channels of communication to be established between the board and the parents’ association. It is further advised that home-school communication be improved though use of periodic newsletters and by further development of the school’s website.
• 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.
• The school’s secretary makes a significant contribution to the work of the school.

4. Leadership and Management
• The board of management is committed to meeting the educational needs of the pupils and to the development of school facilities. A four-year strategic plan is being formulated by the new board. It is advised that along with planned improvements to the school building and grounds, the board should also monitor the effectiveness of whole-school initiatives in literacy and numeracy. It is further advised that the board publish an annual report on the operation of the board. School accounts should be certified annually in accordance with the requirements under Section 18 of the Education Act.
• The acting principal discharges her administrative duties competently. She works hard to provide a safe and happy learning environment for the pupils. She liaises very well with the board of management and keeps members well informed of school activities. She has been instrumental in improving communication within the school community. She is supported in her role by the acting deputy principal.

5. School Self-evaluation
• Some consideration has been given to school-self-evaluation. A report has been prepared for both literacy and numeracy along with school improvement plans (SIPs) in both areas. To assist in the implementation of SSE initiatives, further consideration should be given to the setting of specific targets and class-based actions for improvement. The school should establish a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of SIPs.

Conclusion

The school’s capacity to develop further is very good given the commitment of the acting principal, teachers and board of management to continuous school improvement.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM of Castletownroche NS welcomes the WSE Report. The Board was pleased that the report noted the commitment it has to the “educational needs of the pupils and to the development of school facilities”. However, we acknowledge there are areas that need to be further addressed and focused on.

The report noted pupils’ well being is cared for “most pupils agreed that they get on well with other children in the school and almost all agreed that they liked school”. The Board noted that the report considered the “attractive learning environments” provided by teachers for their pupils and “positive atmospheres are cultivated in all classrooms”.

This WSE process has provided the school with an opportunity for valuable self-evaluation. The Board congratulates the Acting Principal and all members of staff for their dedication and hard work and also commends the parents for their continued 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 B.O.M. has considered the WSE MLL recommendations and is fully committed to working towards their implementation. The recommendations will form the basis of future planning and self-evaluation. The recommendations will be implemented as part of the schools continuous improvement process.

Following on from the WSE;

- A periodic Newsletter is now in place to further enhance Home-School Communication.
- A new Irish programme has been implemented to further enhance the learning of Irish.
- The New Primary Language Curriculum will give more structure to teachers.
- Continuous emphasis is being placed on the teaching of tables throughout the school.
- Teachers have begun collaborating regarding assessments and differentiation.
- Continuous professional Development (CPD) is available to all teachers and they are encouraged to participate.
- The Board will ensure school accounts are certified under section 18 of the Education Act.