

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

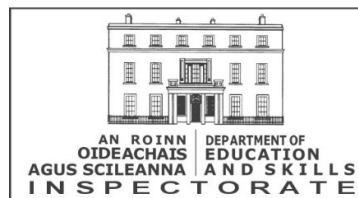
Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

St. Feichin's NS, Fore,
Castlepollard, Co Westmeath

Uimhir rolla: 14450K

Date of inspection: 17th September 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St. Feichin's NS in September 2014. 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.

St Feichin's NS is a four-teacher primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. It has an enrolment of 99 pupils and their attendance is very good. Enrolment levels have risen steadily in recent years.

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

- The school enjoys strong community support, including the efforts of an active parents' association and a committed board of management.
- The principal and in-school management team provide very strong and effective leadership for teaching and learning in the school.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is commendable.
- It is a particular strength of the school that studies of the local environment are integrated into cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning.
- The school has engaged very effectively with the school self-evaluation process.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Some pupils would benefit from further opportunities to consolidate and revise newly-learned concepts more regularly, particularly in relation to sight vocabulary in English and the measures strand in Mathematics.
- To facilitate further collaboration in the whole-school planning process, it is recommended that a planning calendar be devised to plan for and prioritise the regular review of school policies.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are commendable and almost all pupils reported that they enjoyed their lessons and learning.
- Most pupils attain high standards in English reading and they engage productively with writing tasks in a variety of genres. Pupils contribute confidently to classroom discussions and their oral skills are developed purposefully. Written work is presented very neatly.
- Léiríonn tromlach na ndaltaí cumas inmholta an Ghaeilge a thuiscint agus a labhairt ar leibhéal oiriúnach. Úsáidtear an teanga go neamhfhoirmiúl go rialta tríd an scoil. *The majority of pupils show good ability to understand Irish and to speak it at an appropriate level. The language is used informally throughout the school.*
- A majority of pupils achieve high standards in Mathematics. Most pupils recall mathematical facts with speed and accuracy. Pupils use suitable strategies for problem-solving.

- Pupils' responses and written work demonstrate praiseworthy awareness of the local environment and heritage linked to the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education.
- The quality of learning in Music is very good and pupils enjoy singing songs, playing instruments and responding to music.
- Learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs are good and fully appropriate to their priority learning needs and ability levels.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good and some very good teaching was observed. Best practice was characterised by the sharing of learning objectives with pupils, clear structure to lessons, provision of active and collaborative learning activities and use of suitable resources. All teachers practise a wide range of teaching methodologies to provide for the variety of pupils' learning styles.
- All teachers provide high quality planning for their teaching and some plans make explicit links between intended lesson outcomes and the targets outlined in the school's improvement plans for literacy and numeracy. This is very good practice.
- Literacy teaching for English is designed to emphasise oral language development and acquisition of comprehension skills for reading. While phonemic awareness and word-attack skills are developed very effectively, there is scope in some classrooms to revise and consolidate sight vocabulary. *Múintear an Ghaeilge go sciliúl agus cuirtear béim inmholta ar na tréimhsí cumarsáide sna ceachtanna. Irish is taught skilfully and praiseworthy emphasis is place on the communicative approach in lessons.*
- Instruction in Mathematics is frequently focussed on practical mathematics, active learning and problem solving. Some pupils would benefit from further opportunities to consolidate and revise newly-learned concepts more regularly.
- Assessment practices are very effective. Some very good formative assessment techniques were observed in use and these helped with lesson differentiation.
- Effective support teaching is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Individual plans reflect pupils' priority learning needs and support is provided through the in-class and withdrawal teaching models. Teachers implement effective systems of early intervention to minimise learning difficulties in the junior classes.
- It is a particular strength of the school that studies of the local environment are integrated into cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Teachers manage their classrooms very effectively and strive to provide a happy, caring and inclusive learning environment in each classroom. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into school activities through the support of teachers and special needs assistants. Responses to the Inspectorate survey indicate that almost all pupils like school and that there are clear procedures to deal with bullying.
- The school communicates well with the parents and the local community. A very active parents' association provides strong support for the school and parents are sometimes invited to speak to pupils about their areas of expertise. Almost all parents report that they are happy with the school and that they feel welcome in the school.
- 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 provides valuable support for the school, particularly in the provision of resources and the development of the school building. The board fulfils its statutory and policy formation roles effectively. To facilitate further collaboration in the whole-school planning process, it is recommended that a planning calendar be devised to plan for and prioritise the regular review of school policies.

- The principal and in-school management team provide very strong and effective leadership for teaching and learning in the school. The effects of this leadership are evident in the co-ordinated effort to implement a spiral curriculum for pupils.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged very effectively with the school self-evaluation process. Realistic targets have been established through robust evidence gathering and analysis.
- It is clear that the school improvement plans devised for literacy and numeracy are positively influencing teaching and learning approaches. A school-wide system has been established to record, track and analyse assessment information with reference to the school self-evaluation targets and school improvement.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further / engage in school improvement is very good. There is strong collaborative leadership in the school. There is evidence that recommendations from a previous inspection were implemented and a culture of continuous improvement is verified by the school's positive approach to the school self-evaluation process.

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 Feichin's NS accepts the Whole School Evaluation Report. The board appreciates that our dedication to quality teaching and learning experiences is acknowledged and commended. We also welcome recognition of the fact that our school enjoys, 'strong community support and 'strong and effective leadership'. The Board of Management is committed to the implementation of the recommendations of the report. This process will be initiated during this school year (2014-15).

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 report's recommendations will be implemented with immediate effect. The school staff and management board have held collaborative discussions on how these recommendations can effectively improve teaching and learning throughout the school. Action plans have been devised to reinforce and consolidate maths concepts and English sight vocabulary. A three year plan is currently in place to address the review of school policies on a cyclical basis.