

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

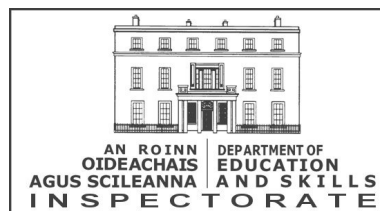
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Scoil Cholmcille
Ballymena, Malin, County Donegal
Uimhir rolla: 146310**

Date of inspection: 8 November 2013



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE – MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Cholmcille in November 2013. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in all learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with the chairperson of the board of management and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents.

The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry. It has an enrolment of ninety-five pupils who are taught in four dual-grade classrooms. Enrolment trends are increasing at a steady rate. Pupils' attendance levels are very good. The school participates in the School Support Programme for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school participates in a number of initiatives to support literacy and numeracy, along with a range of initiatives designed to inculcate positive attitudes to learning among pupils. 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.

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

- The school fosters a very positive, cooperative educational environment in which self-confidence, respectful interaction and life-long learning are nurtured.
- The overall teaching and learning achievements of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, are very good.
- The board of management is very effective in guiding and supporting the work of the school.
- The parents' association engages actively in school life.
- The teaching principal leads teaching and learning in an exemplary manner.
- The in-school management team shows enthusiasm and diligence in the completion of its duties.
- Collaborative planning and teaching approaches are implemented very effectively by all staff.
- Worthwhile initiatives are undertaken as part of the DEIS action plan and school improvement plan.

The following **main recommendation** is made:

- Tá gá le forbairt a dhéanamh ar chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge (The pupils' communication skills in Irish should be developed).

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good in numeracy and very successful progress is evident in respect of literacy development. Teachers have identified particular facets for development in numeracy and literacy; specific worthwhile interventions are in place and very successful progress is being made. There is very good learning underway in the other curriculum areas observed.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá raon leathan rímeanna agus dánta ar eolas ag na daltaí agus is féidir leo iad a aithris go bríomhar. Is féidir leis na daltaí foclóir simplí a úsáid ach tá gá le forbairt a dhéanamh ar chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí. Sa léitheoireacht, tá scileanna tuisceana na ndaltaí sásúil. *In Irish, pupils know a wide range of rhymes and poems and they can recite them with enthusiasm. Pupils can use simple*

vocabulary but the pupils' communication skills in Irish should be developed. In reading, the pupils' comprehension skills are satisfactory. In English, pupils' oral language skills are commendable. Standards of reading and writing are high. In Mathematics, overall learning is very successful. Pupils demonstrate very good recall of number facts and they can complete a range of number operations competently. Pupils are very knowledgeable about what they have learnt in Science and Geography and lesson content is at an appropriately challenging level. In Music, pupils demonstrate a very good sense of musicianship and use a variety of percussion instruments very well to create sound stories. Pupils are afforded opportunities to play in the school's traditional music group and to participate in the choir.

- The overall progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good. Pupils engage well in their learning and complete assigned learning tasks successfully.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is very effective. The teaching staff consists of four mainstream class teachers, one part-time learning-support teacher, who provides support for twenty hours a week, and a resource teacher who provides support for 3.4 hours a week. Teaching in all classrooms is purposeful, well paced and pitched appropriately. Collaborative planning and teaching approaches are implemented very effectively. Information and communications technologies (ICT) are used very well to support learning and teaching. A range of very successful methodologies is organised to cater for pupils' varying abilities. Teachers' skills and talents in specific areas of the curriculum are shared very well to enhance pupils' overall learning experiences.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is highly commendable. The staged approach to supporting pupils is outlined clearly in carefully devised individual plans and implemented very effectively. Specific interventions are used successfully to achieve the learning targets for pupils with special and additional educational needs prioritised in the three-year DEIS action plan and in the school improvement plan. Team teaching, station-teaching and activity-based approaches are very well organised. Evidence of progress in targeted areas of learning are recorded meticulously.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The management of pupils is very effective. The school fosters a very positive cooperative educational environment in which self-confidence, respectful interaction and life-long learning are nurtured. The staff works diligently to meet the emotional and pastoral needs of pupils. Additional staff and facilitators, employed under the School Completion Programme, work to promote the pupils' well-being and development.
- The quality of support for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is very effective. After-school support clubs in literacy and numeracy are among the many worthwhile initiatives organised to encourage attendance and ensure equality of opportunity and educational inclusion of all pupils. There is a high level of consultation between the school and the nearby post-primary school and successful transfer programmes are organised. In questionnaires, completed by parents and by pupils from third to sixth classes as part of the evaluation process, there were high levels of satisfaction indicated in respect of pupil welfare and education provision.
- 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 is very effective in its support of the work of the school. It is satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning. Regular reports are provided by the principal to the board on the overall progress of pupils. The parents' association

plays a very active role in the life of the school and collaborates very effectively with staff and management to organise a broad range of activities which enrich the pupils' experience.

- In-school management is of a very high quality. The teaching principal leads teaching and learning in an exemplary manner. She is supported by an in-school management team that shows enthusiasm and diligence in the completion of its appropriately allocated duties.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged very well in school self-evaluation with an appropriate emphasis placed on reflection and the identification of priorities that best meet the needs of pupils. A range of assessment strategies is used by all teachers to evaluate pupils' progress. Self-assessment learning folders are utilised to encourage pupils to review their own learning. In the pupils' questionnaires, the majority of pupils indicated that they are doing well at reading. However, a minority of pupils indicated that they do not know how well they are doing in Mathematics. Further self-assessment work by pupils in Mathematics would be beneficial.
- Currently, the school has prioritised numeracy development in its school improvement plan. Teachers have adopted effective approaches to the teaching of numeracy and evidence from teachers' assessments reveals that pupils are making very successful and steady progress in this area.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is very good. The proactive leadership of the principal together with the collaborative working methods established among teachers will help to ensure this.

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 is delighted at the recognition of the school's many strengths and particularly its successes in the area of pastoral care for the children and the overall teaching and learning in the school, as well as the very effective collaboration between the Board of Management, staff, parents and pupils.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

To further develop pupils' communication skills in Irish, the school plans to facilitate pupils communicating "as Gaeilge" (in Irish) in conversation practice groups, provide increased access to conversations on digital media and prioritise nathanna na seachtaine (phrases of the week).

In self-assessment, pupils will be encouraged to recognise their great strengths in mathematics.