

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

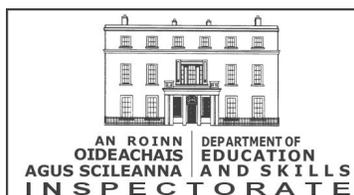
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Streamstown National School,
Streamstown, Co. Westmeath.
Roll Number: 15291V**

Date of inspection: 6 March 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Streamstown National School in March 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.

Streamstown NS is located in a rural community between Mullingar and Horseleap. There are four mainstream class teachers, three part-time support teachers and a special needs assistant on staff. Enrolments have increased steadily over the last number of years and currently, 105 pupils are enrolled. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Meath.

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

- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good.
- Pupils' writing skills are systematically developed throughout the school and the quality of their writing is very good.
- Pupils are very well cared for within the school.
- The principal provides very effective leadership to the school.
- The school engages very well with school self-evaluation and its capacity for school improvement is very high.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The English reading programme should be revised to ensure that all pupils are reading at an ability-appropriate level.
- Learning programmes for pupils with identified learning needs should focus on dealing with the specific difficulties that these pupils experience in accessing the curriculum.
- In oral English and Irish lessons, a greater emphasis should be placed on enriching the pupils' vocabulary and developing their ability to communicate effectively in the target language.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall learning achievements within the school are good.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good. Teachers implement a whole-school approach to problem solving consistently. Pupils' attainments in standardised tests are very good and they can discuss their learning confidently. Mathematics' games and linking Mathematics to the environment are important elements of pupils' learning experiences.

- Learning outcomes in literacy are good, with some areas for development. Pupils' writing skills are developed from an early stage and the quality of their writing is very good. Standardised English reading test results are also very good. The reading programme should be revised to ensure that all pupils are reading at an ability-appropriate level.
- In oral English and Irish lessons, a greater emphasis should be placed on enriching pupils' vocabulary and developing their ability to communicate effectively in the target language. Pupils also need more varied opportunities to use the target language.
- Learning outcomes in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) are good. Many pupils engage in very beneficial project-based learning and can talk about their learning with confidence. In order to ensure a developmental approach to SESE within the school, teachers should agree appropriate topics for each class level.
- There is scope to improve learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs. Learning programmes for pupils with identified learning needs should focus on dealing with the specific difficulties that these pupils experience in accessing the curriculum. Learning programmes in literacy in support settings should focus on developing the various skills of literacy such as decoding, analysis and synthesis.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good, with some areas for improvement.
- Observed lessons were well-structured, teacher questioning was clear and all teachers used a variety of relevant resources effectively. Learning settings are stimulating and supportive of learning. Some teachers should place a greater emphasis on group-based learning and provide more frequent opportunities for collaborative work to their pupils.
- In preparing for teaching oral Irish and English, all teachers should clearly identify the language that pupils should be able to use at the end of the lesson. They should also plan more carefully for the ways in which this language will be taught and include extended opportunities for pupils to use the language during the lessons.
- Overall assessment practices are very good. In many cases, teachers have prepared very comprehensive learning profiles for each pupil. These contain very good assessment data, including self-assessment records. All teachers should now implement this practice. At whole-school level, standardised tests results are carefully recorded and monitored.
- Teaching in support settings has scope for improvement. All support teachers present clear, focused and well-structured lessons. However, the use of support teachers to teach full class groups should be re-evaluated to ensure that these teaching resources are used to support those pupils who are most in need of support. The withdrawal of pupils for support should be targeted at those pupils who require individual or small group instruction in specific skills or concepts that cannot be adequately covered in the mainstream class programme.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. Pupils are managed very effectively and discipline is very good within the school. Pupils are respectful and courteous and a welcoming atmosphere exists within the school. The student council is a very effective way of affording pupils a voice in school life. In questionnaire returns, the vast majority of pupils indicated that they like school and feel safe and secure at school.
- A commendable emphasis is placed on fostering home-school links. Parents receive very good quality information on school life and on their children's education. In questionnaire returns, the vast majority of parents indicated that they feel welcome in school; that the school is well run and that teaching is good 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

- There is scope to improve the work of the board of management. All members are very committed to the school and are commended for the significant improvements they have made to the school's physical environment. The board is advised to up-skill itself on its various responsibilities. A more detailed financial statement should be presented at all board meetings and school accounts should be audited or certified annually in accordance with section 18 of the Education Act 1998. The board should also communicate more frequently with the school community about its work.
- The principal provides very effective leadership to the school. Since her recent appointment, she has successfully led a number of initiatives within the school and maintains a clear focus on teaching and learning. She is very well supported by the deputy principal, who fulfils her leadership role very competently. Both principal and deputy principal are commended for fostering an open, collaborative relationship amongst the teachers.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school engages very well with self-evaluation. Targets for improvement are informed by a wide range of evidence. These targets are clear and focused on learning. Actions to achieve these targets are evident in all learning settings. The school should involve the parents' association in its self-evaluation processes to a greater extent. This could be done through involving them in gathering relevant evidence and discussing the findings of the self-evaluation report and the targets in the school improvement plan with them.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is very high.

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 Streamstown NS welcomes the WSE-MLL report. The report recognises the school's welcoming atmosphere and its commitment to a high standard of management, leadership and learning. It also commends the collaborative and open relationship that has been fostered between teachers, pupils and parents.

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 acknowledges the school's commitment and capacity to engage in school improvement. The Board of Management and staff welcomes the recommendations made in the report. We plan to incorporate them in our school improvement plan and implement them as part of our continuous improvement process.