

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

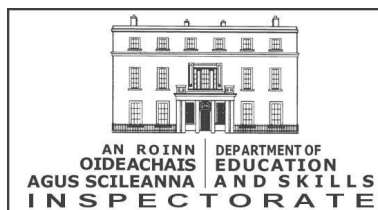
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Rockfield NS,
Coolaney, County Sligo
Uimhir rolla: 15378K**

Date of inspection: 20 January 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Rockfield National School in January 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 review of a selection of school documents. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Rockfield National School, located in the village of Coolaney, has a current enrolment of 173 pupils. The school is growing rapidly. It is under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Achonry.

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

- The school has a very diligent, professional and committed staff led by a highly competent and effective principal.
- The quality of school improvement, particularly regarding curricular and resource priorities, is very impressive. The school's commitment to the self-evaluation process further supports such developments.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil outcomes in all subject areas is good and that of Mathematics is very good. There is evidence of highly effective individual practices across the curriculum.
- The development of independent work habits and positive attitudes to learning in pupils, and the quality of pupil participation and pupil engagement is highly commended.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of written work is very good.
- The school has a very supportive and caring ethos. The relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive and respectful.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The extensive assessments carried out by teachers should form the basis for differentiated programmes of work for individuals and groups of pupils.
- Teachers should develop a whole-school approach to writing genres, with less emphasis on lower-order textbook activities across the curriculum.
- A greater emphasis on pair work and group work should be implemented across the school to support pupils' expressive language skills.
- The board of management should ensure teachers in support roles engage in appropriate professional development.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall learning achievements of pupils are good across the curriculum. Very high levels of pupil engagement were noted in almost all classes during the evaluation. Learning achievements of individual pupils could be enhanced through greater differentiation of work programmes.
- Literacy achievements are good with some very good outcomes evident in pupils' written work. The quality of pupils' handwriting is particularly noteworthy. Pupils have a broad repertoire of poems and songs, in both Irish and English. The structured and systematic development of pupils' comprehension skills in the senior classes is producing very good outcomes.
- Tá gnothachtáil na ndaltaí go maith sa Ghaeilge. Tá foclóir leathan ag formhór na ndaltaí agus tá siad in ann iad féin a chur in iúl go héifeachtach. Moltar béim a leagan ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach chun a gcumas labhartha a fhorbairt sa bhreis. Tá gá le léitheoireacht agus scríbhneoireacht a sheachaint go dtí rang a dó, de réir *Curaclam na Bunscoile*. *Pupil achievement in Irish is good. Most pupils have a broad vocabulary and can express themselves effectively. The communicative approach should be emphasised to further develop pupils' oral skills. Reading and writing activities in Irish should be avoided until second class, in accordance with the Primary School Curriculum.*
- Achievement in Mathematics is very good, showing significant improvements over time. Pupils in most classes demonstrated very good knowledge of number facts and displayed very positive attitudes to Mathematics.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good, with some optimal practices evident. Classroom environments are very effectively organised. High levels of pupil participation and engagement were observed. Pupils' oral competence should be further developed through pair work and group work. Teachers conduct extensive assessments, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and have developed exemplary approaches to assessment for learning. Such assessment results should be used to differentiate programmes of work for pupils. Teachers should also implement a whole-school approach to writing genres, with less emphasis on lower-order textbook activities across the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs ranged from satisfactory to very good. There is a need for a clearer rationale for the selection of pupils for learning support, in line with school policy. There is also a need to ensure that interventions are targeted for those pupils in most need of support, and to critically appraise such interventions. The board of management should ensure teachers in support roles undertake appropriate professional development.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The quality of pupil management is very good in the majority of classes where pupils display independent work habits, mature classroom behaviours and positive attitudes to work. Very positive and respectful pupil-teacher relationships were observed during the evaluation. In a questionnaire issued to pupils during the evaluation, almost all pupils agreed that they were happy at school, they feel safe at school and that there are clear rules for behaviour.
- Pupils from different minority groups are very well integrated with their peers. The potential to capitalise on the richness of language and culture from the school community is currently untapped.
- Teachers show a high level of commitment to their pupils. The school has established very good relations with parents. Appropriate and effective communication has enhanced home-school relationships. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. Parents indicated, through a questionnaire, that teaching is good in the school and they are made aware of the school's code of behaviour.
- The school is compliant with child protection requirements.

4. Leadership and Management

- The overall quality of the work of the board is good. The board of management is highly commended for its work on the development of the school building and playground. The quality of resource provision in the school is very good. The board should certify school accounts annually.
- The work of the in-school management team is good. The principal provides exceptional leadership to a very hard-working and dedicated staff. She has a clear vision for the school and leads by example. Members of the in-school management team attend professionally and earnestly to their duties. The board should review these management posts on a regular basis in line with the school's medium-term plan.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation is very good. The teaching staff, led by the principal, has engaged in a critical evaluation of current practices and continues to explore effective evidence bases for literacy targets. Individual teacher planning provides evidence of their commitment to school improvement. Teachers should systematically track individual pupils and analyse assessment results across the school. The board of management should be kept informed of the overall school achievements in standardised tests.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good considering the leadership skills and vision of the principal and the openness, professionalism and commitment of the teaching staff.