An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Naomh Áine,
Rathgarogue, New Ross, Co. Wexford
Roll number: 16023B

Date of inspection: 29 September 2015
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Naomh Áine in September 2015. 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; a response was not received from the board.

Scoil Naomh Áine is located in Rathgarogue in the parish of Cushinstown in Co. Wexford. It is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. The attendance of the 216 pupils is very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The commitment of the board of management to all aspects of the development of the school is highly praised.
- The principal and in-school management team have contributed significantly to the implementation of whole-school approaches to organisation and curriculum development.
- The teachers are committed to their work and show a strong willingness to develop their teaching practices and introduce new approaches.
- Parents report very high satisfaction levels with the school, with all parents reporting that they consider that teaching is good in the school.
- Pupils' positive disposition towards school is reflective of teachers’ efforts to deliver a broad and interesting curriculum.
- Pupil achievement in literacy is very good. The implementation of a school-wide approach to writing is yielding very positive results.

The following main recommendations are made:

- In Irish, the development of a communicative approach on a whole-school basis is recommended to further develop pupils’ speaking skills.
- The process of devising individualised education plans for pupils accessing support would benefit from the development of more specific and time framed learning targets that can facilitate further monitoring of pupil progress.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are commendable, as is reflected in their performance in standardised tests. Whole-school approaches in various curriculum areas, particularly in literacy and numeracy contribute very successfully to the overall quality of learning.
- In Mathematics effective use is made of a wide range of manipulative materials to support pupils’ learning. Whole-school approaches to the development of the pupils’ mathematical language and abilities in mental mathematics are being implemented successfully. It is noted that the school has prioritised problem-solving for development in this school year. In the pupil questionnaire most pupils indicate that they are doing well at maths.
- Múintear foclóir leathan sa Ghaeilge agus baintear feidhm as roinnt ábhar léirithe agus cluichí teanga chun suim a mhúscailt sna daltaí. B’fhéidir cur chuige cumarsáideach a fhorbairt chun cumas labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh ar bhonn uile-scoil. A broad vocabulary is taught in Irish and the teachers use visual aids and language games to support pupils’ learning. It would be worthwhile
developing a communicative approach, on a whole-school basis, to further develop pupils’ speaking skills.

- The teachers create very attractive and stimulating learning environments for the pupils.
- A variety of assessment tools is employed to evaluate pupils’ learning. Assessment for learning and self-assessment have become key features of the work.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is very good. The teachers are highly committed to their work and to continuously extending and developing their practice. Learning intentions are regularly shared with the pupils at the outset of lessons. Opportunities for pupils’ active engagement and critical thinking was observed in a number of classrooms. Such approaches could be usefully extended across the school.
- English is very well taught in the school. The pupils are expressive and can effectively engage in discussions. Admireable attention is placed on promoting the pupils' reading skills and most pupils reported that they are doing well at reading. A school-wide approach to the teaching of writing is yielding very positive results and samples of the pupils' work are attractively displayed.
- There is a good standard of planning and preparation across the school.
- A useful whole-school policy has been developed to guide practice in relation to pupils accessing support for learning. A highly collaborative and conscientious approach is in evidence across the school. School practices provide for both in-class support and withdrawal to the resource teaching setting. Support teachers employ a good range of strategies to promote pupil learning. Praiseworthy inclusive practice was observed in the teaching of SPHE and Drama.
- Good individual education plans (IEPs) and pupil profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) are prepared for pupils with special needs, and useful consultative arrangements are in place. This process would benefit further through the development of more specific and time framed learning targets that can facilitate greater monitoring of pupil progress.
- The special education classroom currently provides for three areas for teaching and learning. In reviewing arrangements for individualised and small group support, the development of an environment conducive to learning for pupils with special needs should be facilitated, as far as practicable.

3. Support for pupils’ well-being

- Support for pupils’ well-being is very good and the pupils experience a caring and encouraging school environment. The pupils are managed well and engage in their learning tasks with high levels of enthusiasm and interest. Suitable co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are provided. The involvement of pupils in committees for the Green School and Active Flag is praised and it is now opportune to consider extending the pupil voice further with the introduction of a pupil council.
- 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

- Leadership and management are significant strengths of the school. The board of management is actively involved in all aspects of the school and is committed to ensuring a high quality education for the pupils.
- The principal is very organised and together with the in-school management team is highly committed to the development of teaching and learning.
The parent’s association (PA) works industriously to support the school through fund-raising and the organisation of a variety of school related activities. In discussion, PA representatives strongly endorsed all aspects of school provision. In questionnaires, all parents indicated that they felt welcome in the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

The school staff has engaged enthusiastically and meaningfully in the school self-evaluation process. A number of praiseworthy initiatives to progress pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy are underway. These interventions are impacting positively on pupil learning.

Conclusion

The school’s capacity to develop further and to engage in school improvement is very good. Teachers indicate a receptiveness to change and continuous improvement.