

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

REPORT

**Saint Patrick's Junior National School
Skerries, County Dublin
Roll number: 16333Q**

Date of inspection: 13 January 2016



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St. Patrick's Junior National School in January 2016. 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 teacher 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.

Saint Patrick's National School is a junior school catering for boys and girls from infants to second class. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. There are currently 334 pupils enrolled and attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements is very good.
- The quality of teaching is of a high standard with some very good teaching observed in both mainstream and support settings.
- The staged approach to special educational needs (SEN) provision is very well implemented. However, the co-ordination of provision should be reviewed.
- Collaborative approaches to planning underpin the work of teachers though there is a need to further develop whole-school and classroom planning.
- Pastoral care provision is of a high quality.
- Effective leadership and management are evident in the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Co-ordination of the SEN provision should be reviewed to facilitate regular and ongoing in-class team teaching, to minimise interruptions in classrooms and to streamline the learning experiences for pupils.
- Whole-school planning should be contextualised to this school and reflect agreed approaches incorporating the explicit development of play-based methodologies. Teachers' planning should clearly outline learning objectives, differentiation and assessment practices.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements is very good. Pupils show enthusiastic engagement in a broad range of learning experiences. They displayed commendable knowledge in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education during the evaluation. Their handwriting and work presentation are praiseworthy.
- Overall, the quality of pupils' learning in English is very good. They demonstrate great fluency in reading and use comprehension strategies effectively. Pupils' ability to write stories and news is very well developed. This should be extended to include a greater range of genres. Pupils participate enthusiastically in talk and discussion during lessons. Discrete oral language activities targeting specific oral skills would further enhance their competencies.
- *Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama go maith. Tá timpeallacht shaibhir cruthaithe don teanga agus baineann na daltaí úsáid an-mhaith as Gaeilge*

neamhfhoirmiúil ar fud na scoile. Baintear feidhm éifeachtach as filíocht agus as amhráin chun taithí a thabhairt do na daltaí ar fhuaimneanna agus ar struchtúr na teanga. Moltar scileanna réamh-léitheoireachta agus réamh-scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí a shaibhriú trí úsáid a bhaint as leabhair mhóra.

In Irish, the quality of teaching and learning is good. A rich language environment is created and pupils make very good use of informal Irish throughout the school. Effective use is made of poetry and songs to give pupils experience of the sounds and structure of the language. It is recommended that pupils' pre-reading and pre-writing skills be enriched through the use of large storybooks.

- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good. Classrooms are well developed as mathematics-rich environments. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise and apply their learning in relation to number facts and accuracy in computation. The inclusion of problem-solving activities in mathematic lessons will further enhance their learning.

2. Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching is of a high standard. Teachers create stimulating and purposeful learning environments and employ a range of active and collaborative teaching approaches. Very effective linkage and integration within and across curricular areas were evident in teachers' practice.
- The quality of teaching provided for SEN pupils in withdrawal settings is very good. Effective teaching is based on well-developed educational plans, with specific learning targets, resulting in positive learning experiences and good outcomes for pupils. The staged approach is very well implemented.
- The co-ordination of support for SEN in the school should be reviewed. The current in-class model of support should be extended on a more regular and on-going basis in all settings. This would further support the development of play-based methodologies in infant classrooms. A review of the SEN timetable, minimising the disruption to classes and varying the learning experiences for pupils, is advised.
- There is scope to develop the overall quality of whole-school planning. Content should be clearly delineated for each class level to ensure progression in pupils' learning outcomes and to guide classroom practice. Plans, especially in literacy and numeracy, should include agreed whole-school approaches and methodologies.
- Collaborative approaches to classroom planning underpin the work of the teachers. To enhance the quality of short-term planning, learning objectives and differentiation and assessment practices should be clearly outlined. Long-term planning should be based on curricular strands and strand units and contextualised to the school.
- A good range of assessment practices is evident. Pupils' work is corrected with some feedback given for improvement. Good examples of *assessment for learning* approaches were observed and this practice should be extended to all settings.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pastoral care provision is of a high quality. Pupils are well managed within a caring and respectful school environment and they display positive attitudes towards learning. Staff collaborate with external agencies to provide a range of programmes to support pupils. The special needs assistants work purposefully to support pupils' needs.
- The school is welcoming of parents and in responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, almost all parents indicated that they believe their child is doing well in school. The parents' association plays an active role in the school, providing

practical assistance with many school-based activities. Regular newsletters provide good-quality information to parents on school life.

- 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

- Effective leadership and management are evident in the school. The work of the board of management is praiseworthy. The board has been proactive in developing and extending the school building and provides a well-resourced educational environment for pupils. It is recommended that a planning calendar be drawn up to facilitate cyclical review of whole-school curriculum and organisational plans.
- The principal provides effective leadership to the school community. She is committed to developing the well-being of pupils and purposefully leads the staff towards school improvement. The in-school management (ISM) team supports the work of the principal and members diligently undertake their assigned duties. Reviewed roles and responsibilities should clearly outline curricular, administrative and pastoral duties reflecting the school's emerging priorities. Reconvening of regular, formal ISM meetings is advised. Commendably, other staff members lead a variety of initiatives. In response to questionnaires, all teachers agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school's level of engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is of a high quality. SSE reports have been prepared and school improvement plans in literacy and numeracy have been developed. Given that a significant emphasis is being placed on teacher observation and professional dialogue to measure improvement, the development of specific criteria for these observations would further enhance the school's capacity to monitor progress.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good. Current self-evaluation practices indicate openness to change and to continuous improvement.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Patrick's JNS welcomes this very positive report which affirms the dedication of the staff to the care and well being of the pupils, the high standard of teaching and the very good learning outcomes achieved throughout the school, as well as the effective leadership and management of the school by the Board, the Principal and the In-School Management Team.

The Board notes that the report affirms the high quality of teaching provided for pupils with SEN in withdrawal settings with effective teaching based on well-developed educational plans and specific learning targets, resulting in positive learning experiences and good outcomes for pupils and the fact that the continuum of support is very well established.

The Board is pleased that the report recognises the commendable knowledge displayed by pupils in SESE and the school's high quality level of engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

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

The Board of Management has considered the WSE recommendations carefully. The school is acting on the recommendations as follows:

Regular on-going in-class provision by the SEN team will be further extended to facilitate team teaching in a variety of areas as part of our School Self Evaluation plan. Co-ordination of SEN provision will always depend on the level of learning support/resource provided to schools nationally and on the individual needs of the children to be supported.

The timetabling of learning support/resource provision will be reviewed with a view to streamlining as far as possible the learning experiences for pupils while keeping the children's learning needs central to the process.

Whole school planning will be more fully contextualised to this school in a structured and systematic fashion as part of our school development plan. Inspectors' feedback regarding learning objectives, differentiation and assessment practices will be fully taken on board.

It is anticipated that the Aistear Programme will be fully embedded in school practice from September 2016 on and whole school plans will reflect this.

