

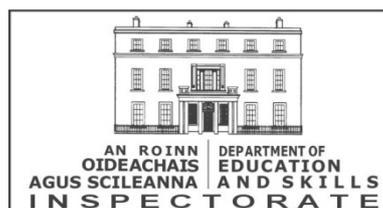
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

REPORT

**Saint Brendan's NS,
Loughshinny, Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 16844S**

Date of inspection: 15 January 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St Brendan's NS 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 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.

St Brendan's NS is a vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin serving the village of Loughshinny in the parish of Rush, Co Dublin. There are 216 pupils currently enrolled and enrolment figures are stable. Attendance levels are very good.

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

- There is a strong sense of commitment among all stakeholders to the provision of a quality education to the pupils of the community.
- The principal, together with the teachers and staff, is very successful in creating positive learning experiences for pupils.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good.
- Pupils are attaining very well in reading.
- The quality of teaching skill evident in the school is generally of a very high standard. Where teaching is of good quality, this results in purposeful lessons that are very effective in facilitating and consolidating pupils' learning.
- The behaviour of pupils is excellent. Teachers and staff work carefully to ensure that pupils feel known and valued.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Tá scóip chun forbartha i ngnéithe den Ghaeilge go mórmhór maidir le éispéiris sa leitheoireacht agus tuilleadh leanúnachais a chinntiú thar na snáitheanna. *There is scope to develop aspects of Irish particularly in terms of pupils' experience of reading and further continuity across the strands of the curriculum.*
- Attention should be paid to establishing an agreed understanding of good quality planning and preparation informed by the very good practices evident in many settings.
- There is scope for the local dimension to figure more prominently and systematically in the school's implementation of the curriculum.
- While the quality of lesson delivery in support settings is very good, there is scope to develop and individualise support provision further including the additional attention paid to the more able pupils.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- In literacy, the school has prioritised the expansion of pupils' vocabulary as part of its school improvement plan. Worthwhile strategies under this plan are being implemented very effectively throughout the school and are having a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils speak confidently and coherently in both small group and whole-class contexts. Pupils read well and have effective word-attack skills. Pupils engage in writing tasks with enthusiasm and there are many examples of good quality work. While systematic attention is paid to the focused teaching of specific genres in writing, there is scope to adopt a similar approach to identifying and agreeing on appropriate

standards of learning particularly in terms of the more able pupils. This discussion of standards should also include issues of punctuation, spelling and penmanship.

- Tá soláthar don Ghaeilge go maith san iomlán sa scoil agus léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na hoibre agus na foghlama inti. Is éifeachtach mar a thugtar faoi na daltaí a chumasú in abairtí iomlána a chruthú agus a rá, le tacaíocht chuí nuair is gá, sna ranganna naíonáin. Is éifeachtach mar a chuirtear leis i ranganna eile le daltaí a chur ag láimhsiú briathra agus i gceachtanna faoi leith len' iad a chur ag cur síos ar bhonn níos leathnaithe ar thopaicí. I líon beag de cheachtanna nótaíleadh eiliminití d'aistriúchán sa teagasc agus is gá cloí le húsáid na sprioctheanga sa tsoláthar iomlán. Tá ar chumas na ndaltaí léamh ó bhéal le foghraíocht mhaith ach tá scóip le tuilleadh béime a leagan ar thuiscint ar shleachta. Is ar shleachta loma ó théacsleabhair a bhunaítear mórchuid na hoibre agus moltar acmhainní níos leithne agus níos saibhre, fíorleabhair agus acmhainní ar-líne, a úsáid ina n-ionad. Léiríonn cóipleabhair na ndaltaí líon maith de chleachtaí scríbhneoireachta ach moltar scríobh níos rialta i *genres* sa bhreis. Ar mhaithe le leanúnachas i gcomhthéacs leibhéal chumais mhaith na ndaltaí moltar teacht ar thuilleadh comhthuisceana maidir le cur chuige agus caighdeán a mbítear ag súil leo do na grádléibhéil éagsúla sna snáitheanna éagsúla. *Provision for Irish is good overall in the school and the pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to work and learning in the language. Pupils are enabled effectively to create and say full sentences, with appropriate supports when necessary, in infant classes. This is built on effectively in other classes where pupils are put to using verbs and in some lessons engaging in more extended discourse on topics. In a small number of lessons elements of translation were observed in the teaching and there is need to adhere to the target language in overall provision. Pupils are able to read aloud with good pronunciation but there is scope to put more emphasis on comprehension of passages. Reading is mostly based on limited passages from textbooks and it is recommended that broader and richer resources, real books and on-line resources, should be used instead. Pupils' copybooks reveal a good amount of written exercises but writing in more genres more frequently is advocated. In the interests of continuity in the context of the good levels of ability among pupils, further shared understanding regarding approaches and anticipated standards for different classes in the different classes is advocated.*
- The pupils' learning in numeracy is of a high standard. Pupils display a positive attitude to Mathematics. Pupils have a very good understanding of mathematical concepts and facts and a good knowledge of computation and procedures. The issue of problem-solving has been identified by the school as an area for development and worthwhile strategies are being implemented to good effect. In some instances, there is scope to make further provision for more able pupils.
- The overall learning achievements of pupils range between good and very good. Pupils demonstrate a commendable ability to describe and explain their learning across the curriculum. Lessons in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are thought-provoking for pupils. In Music, while pupils sing tunefully and with enthusiasm and confidence, there is scope to adopt a more systematic approach to the teaching of music literacy and to incorporate a broader repertoire of song. Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge of what they have learned in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). However, the local dimension should figure more prominently in this provision. A range of worthwhile co-curricular activities are provided by teachers which add richness to learning provision.
- Pupils with special educational needs participate well in their support lessons. Engagement levels during support lessons are very good. The quality of educational experiences is very good overall with effective use made of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), physical and text resources during lessons. The quality of teaching is good. Concepts are explained clearly. Very good attention is paid to consolidating phonemic awareness.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school ranges between good and very good with some instances of practice requiring improvement. Where teaching is of a very high standard, lessons are well planned, have clear objectives, are appropriately challenging, are well-paced and facilitate pupil participation. In some other instances, teacher planning was overly brief to fully support good quality learning particularly in terms of different pupil ability levels. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Concepts are explained clearly. While teachers supply good plans, including individualised plans, to support their teaching there is scope for planning for pupils with special educational needs to develop further overall in line with best practice. More use of baseline assessment tools to inform target setting and for individual targets to be outlined for each pupil are recommended. There are also some instances where record keeping should be more outcome-based.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The management of pupils is of a very high quality marked by affirming and respectful interactions between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs within the mainstream settings is managed very successfully and these pupils experience a good quality learning environment conducive to their needs. In order to better meet the needs of more able pupils, the school needs to consider extending its support provision for these more able and gifted pupils. The wide range of extra and co-curricular activities in which pupils are encouraged to participate is very commendable.
- In a questionnaire completed by pupils from third to sixth class as part of the evaluation process, strong levels of satisfaction are expressed by them with regard to how they feel they are affirmed and supported in their learning. In a questionnaire completed by parents as part of the evaluation process, there are similarly strong levels of satisfaction with the quality of education being provided in the school. There is some doubt expressed by some parents with regard to their knowledge of the content of the school's relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy. This should be explored further by 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 among Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. Leadership and Management

- The board of management demonstrates an admirable commitment to the effective functioning of the school. A treasurer's report should be appended to the minutes of each board meeting. The principal, together with the in-school management team and teachers, is very successful in creating a positive learning experience for pupils. There is scope for the in-school management team to further review their duties to include support for curriculum provision. Many teachers have adopted a leadership role in curriculum implementation and this is commendable. Minutes should be maintained for in-school management meetings.

5. School Self-evaluation

- A range of worthwhile records of pupils' learning is maintained across the school including checklists, pupil profiles and samples of pupils' work. A handover folder has been recently developed to accompany each class as they proceed through the school and this will assist in enhancing continuity and progression in pupils' learning from class to class.

- The school has been very successful in identifying specific targets to guide improvement and there is evidence of worthwhile strategies being implemented effectively to achieve this improvement.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is very good given the interest of teachers in their pupils, their expressed interest in on-going development, the examples of high quality teaching observed and the purposeful work environment created by the principal.

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 welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation report of April 2014. The board will use the contents of the report to continue enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at St Brendan's N.S. The Board also acknowledges the strong levels of satisfaction expressed by parents and by pupils in their questionnaires with the quality of education being provided in the school. The Board wishes to thank the whole school community who contributed to the process and whose input over the coming years will be vital to ensure the high standards in this report are maintained and built on.

We welcome their findings with regard to the strong sense of commitment among all stakeholders to the provision of a quality education to the pupils of the community and the creation of positive learning experiences for our pupils. We would also like to thank the team for their acknowledgement of the quality of pupils learning in Maths, the generally very high standard of teaching and the excellent behaviour of our students. It was very important to us that it was acknowledged that there is an atmosphere in our school where the teachers and staff work carefully to ensure our pupils were known and valued. We all felt it was a worthwhile and positive experience.

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

We equally welcome the report's recommendations which will be used to influence the future direction of our School Improvement Plan. Many of the recommendations were addressed immediately and we look forward to putting the others in place imminently. We welcome the affirmation of the progress in our English curriculum plan and we will, as recommended, endeavour to extend these positive changes to the Irish plan going forward. We also look forward to emphasising the local dimension of the rich historical heritage and geographical location of our school. We also welcome the affirmation of the quality of lesson delivery in support settings and we will continue to strive to provide support for all our students, those more able and those with learning difficulties. Here at St Brendan's we will move forward in a spirit of partnership and consultation in all areas of policy formation and school activities to ensure that we achieve the best and most positive outcomes for all members of our school community.

