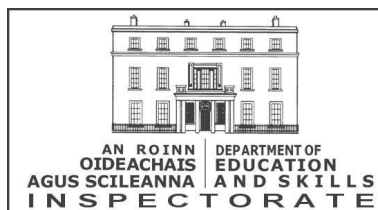


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning
REPORT

Quilty National School
Quilty, Co Clare
Uimhir rolla: 17020A

Date of inspection: 11 February 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

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

Quilty N.S. is a rural mixed school under Catholic patronage overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in West Clare. The teaching staff comprises a teaching principal, deputy principal and a shared learning support teacher who is based in a neighbouring school. The school is included in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative and currently has an enrolment of 44 pupils. Enrolment levels are steady and overall pupil attendance is good.

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

- The school is well run, has a very welcoming atmosphere and is well maintained and resourced.
- The teachers work diligently and as reflective practitioners who have a very strong commitment to their continuing professional development.
- The school benefits from strong, insightful and inclusive leadership.
- The pupils respond enthusiastically to an affirming culture in which their gifts and talents are celebrated and they achieve very well across the broad spectrum of curriculum objectives.
- The school is carefully and effectively managed by the board of management.
- Parents are involved in supporting their children's education in a variety of practical ways, including sports coaching, shared reading and work in the school garden.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- When formulating school development plans, more specific goals and concrete criteria for measuring progress should be included, to enable more effective evaluation of progress.
- The provision of supplementary teaching under the general allocation model should be ring-fenced to ensure that it is directed towards supporting pupils' progression in literacy and numeracy.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils range from good to very good. Analysis of standardized testing over time indicates steady improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes. The school has been particularly successful in raising standards of attainment for pupils who have struggled to achieve their potential. The presentation of pupils work is of a high standard and much progress has been made in improving pupils' writing skills through systematic engagement with a programme of writing in various genres. The pupils are making good progress towards acquiring independent and co-operative learning skills.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá se soiléir go bhfuil dea-thoil ag na daltaí i leith na teanga agus saibhreas maith teanga forbartha acu. Tá raon leathan rann agus dánta ar eolas acu agus tá a gcuid scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta inmholta. *(In Irish it is evident that the pupils are positively disposed towards the language and that they*

have developed a good richness of language. They have learned a broad range of rhymes and poems and their reading and writing skills are commendable.)

- Maths standards are particularly high and some pupils have acquired good problem solving skills.
- Work observed in Music indicates that pupils knowledge of musical concepts is impressive, and that they can perform a broad repertoire of songs and tunes.
- The rate of progress achieved by special educational needs (SEN) pupils generally is very good.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school ranges from good to very good with exemplary practice noted in some lessons. Pupils' immediate environment as a context for learning is purposefully exploited through work in the school garden and sea shore, school trails, well-planned educational outings and engagement with projects such as Green Schools. There is some scope for more collaborative work and work in pairs but this is an area that is developing well. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively both as a demonstration tool by teachers and in a more interactive sense.
- In English, good work is underway in shared reading and the promotion of the reading habit throughout the school. *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, is effectively implemented in the junior room. The concerted efforts to have pupils write in a range of genres is commendable. In oral language pupils could be given more opportunities to use key vocabulary in presentations and debates, thus bridging the gap between receptive and expressive language.
- Múintear an Ghaeilge le scil agus dearfach. B'fhiú anois Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Chonrach a riaradh sa scoil chun tuilleadh eolais a fháil ar chaighdeán Gaeilge na scoile. *(Irish is taught in a skilful and positive manner. It would be appropriate at this point to administer the Drumcondra Irish Test to further evaluate the standard of Irish in the school.)*
- In Mathematics, thorough lessons were observed during which Mathematics language was emphasised and key concepts were explored. Number facts are thoroughly taught and there is a rigorous effort to enhance the pupils' problem-solving skills through mental and written exercises.
- The quality of support provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Support is provided in both in-class and withdrawal settings. The teaching of basic literacy skills is systematic and clearly focused on the identified priority learning needs of the pupils. Support should be focused on enabling pupils with learning difficulties to achieve appropriate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The pupils are very well managed, are frequently affirmed and encouraged continuously to develop their particular skills and talents. Whole-school assemblies should be considered as a means of further extending this good work.
- Analysis of questionnaires suggests that the pupils have very positive attitudes towards safety at school, and they also responded particularly positively to questions on liking school and enjoying lessons and learning.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection 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

- The board of management conducts its business in an astute and careful manner. Prudent use and management of resources by the board have resulted in a very pleasant and well-resourced environment for pupils' learning. The publication of an agreed report of board meetings is recommended.
- The principal maintains close links with parents and her leadership skills are highly respected in the community. She is very committed and diligent in carrying out her duties and maintains a clear focus on the welfare of pupils and on improving

standards of teaching and learning. The principal receives sterling support and co-operation from the deputy principal and learning support teacher.

- In responses to questionnaires the vast majority of parents indicated high levels of satisfaction with the welcoming and happy atmosphere in the school. They feel that teaching is good, that their children are doing well and that school reports give a good picture of how their children are progressing.

5. School Self-evaluation (SSE)

- In its engagement with the SSE process the school has built on the planning expertise acquired through DEIS. The analysis of the current state of learning and teaching in Mathematics, presented in the SSE report, is thorough, clear and informed by input from all relevant stakeholders. Assessment practices generally are very well developed, a factor that assists significantly in determining progress. A more clinical approach to the selection of specific and measurable targets for improvement should enhance this process further. Advice was given on possible approaches to determine the focus of similar work in Mathematics.

Conclusion

The school's has a strong capacity to achieve further development. This capacity is largely determined by valuable experience gained in participating in the DEIS initiative and underpinned by an openness to new learning and change, and commitment to the pupils' learning and development.