

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

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

REPORT

**Saint Francis' Junior National School
Clonshaugh Drive, Priorswood, Dublin 17
Roll number: 17104G**

Date of inspection: 14 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. Francis' 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 representatives, completed parent 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 Francis' National School is a junior school catering for boys and girls from junior infants to second class. The school is presented as a very tidy and organised learning environment. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It participates in Delivering Educational Improvement in Schools (DEIS), Band One, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The school principal, management and staff work in a very cooperative and committed manner to provide a nurturing, safe and fulfilling learning experience for the pupils. In so doing, they undertake many additional duties and responsibilities voluntarily.
- Teachers' preparation for lessons, and related learning activities, is of a very high standard. Short-term plans specify content clearly; however, the learning needs of different ability levels are not sufficiently addressed in some cases.
- The quality of pupils' learning in numeracy is very good.
- Very good practices are in place to develop pupils' reading skills. While there are good practices in place for the teaching of oral language skills and writing, there is scope to further develop both in terms of planning and assessment.
- Tá dul chun cinn mhaith á dhéanamh ag na daltaí sa Ghaeilge. *Pupils are making good progress in Irish.*
- A very structured and positive school environment has been developed, where pupils engage purposefully and enthusiastically in their learning.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is delivered in a nurturing, deliberate and progressive manner.
- The parents' association and ancillary staff provide valuable support for the school.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- Teaching and learning in oral language and writing would be enhanced by a further specification of learning objectives and the closer monitoring of pupils' learning. Particular attention should also be paid to the development of oral language across the curriculum.
- Teachers' short-term planning should make more specific provision for the range of ability levels in the class.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good. Learning activities are very well designed with a strong emphasis on active hands-on learning experiences. To this end, station teaching and cooperative learning are well employed. Pupils are making good progress across the various curricular areas inspected. They reveal interest in their work and apply themselves with enthusiasm and focus. Suitable provision is in place for the development of skills across the curriculum.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good. Strong emphasis is placed on number knowledge. Concepts are explained clearly and pupils are provided with various opportunities to engage and interrogate them. Station teaching, concrete resources, discussion, in-class support paradigms, problem solving and specific mathematical programmes are purposefully implemented to advance pupils' skills. Good emphasis is placed on the local environment. There is potential for greater planning in relation to differentiation for the more able pupils.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good. Very good processes are in place to develop word attack and phonological skills. A very effective programme involving differentiated reading is also in place to support such work. There is potential for the more specific delineation of cognitive applied language proficiency (CALP) in teacher planning and for the wider recording and celebration of language across the curriculum. A systematic approach is in place to promote and develop pupils' writing skills across the genres. Pupils approach writing tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. Further attention could be paid to analysing pupils' independent writing in order to identify teaching points for future learning.
- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as modhanna agus fearais éagsúla chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Glacann na daltaí páirt fhothmhar sna ceachtanna. Cuirtear béim chuí ar chluichí teanga, ar amhráin agus ar fhilíocht. B'fhiú, i gcásanna foghlama áirithe, níos mó béime a chur ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil agus ar dheiseanna labhartha chun féin-mhuinín agus cumas cainte na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. I gcuid de na ceachtanna, moltar raon teanga na gceachtanna a leathnú chun eispéireas teanga níos saibhre a chur i bhfeidhm.

The standard of learning in Irish is good. Teachers make effective use of various methods and resources to teach the language. Pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons. Appropriate emphasis is placed on language games, songs and on poetry. In certain learning contexts, greater emphasis should be placed on informal Irish and on speaking opportunities to further develop pupils' self-confidence and speaking capacity. In some of the lessons, the breadth of language could be extended to provide a richer experience of language.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is high. Lessons are well presented in a vibrant and engaging manner. Very good provision is in place for connecting content to the experience and environment of the pupils. Teachers' preparation for their work is of a high quality with resources and, in particular, information and communication technology (ICT) used to very good effect. Overall, teachers' planning is of a good quality. In some cases, long and short-term plans should make greater provision for differentiation and CALP language. Teachers make use of a very good range of methodologies, most notably pair work and focused group activities, in numeracy and literacy.
- Assessment practices are of a high quality. Progress records are gainfully and systematically employed. Good provision is in place for pupil self-evaluation in a number of curricular areas.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils in need of additional support are identified systematically. Commendable care is taken in the selection of

approach to deliver such support. All support provision is delivered in an affirming and skilled manner, with a strong emphasis on creating well-paced, appropriately pitched active learning experiences for the pupils. To further enhance planning, priority learning needs should be situated more prominently in short-term plans. This will also assist in monitoring pupils' progress. Group-focused support for literacy and numeracy is being implemented very effectively. In some instances, the length of support lessons in a withdrawal setting should be reviewed with a view to shortening them. For the same reason, the practice of a few pupils receiving two consecutive periods of support should also be reviewed. The needs of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) should be assessed and met more explicitly through the delivery of a specific language programme.

3. Support for pupils' wellbeing

- A number of well-designed school interventions and initiatives are in operation to effectively develop pupils' well-being. They present as happy and focused learners. Pupils' happiness is closely monitored, with commendably proactive and prompt efforts being made to promote well-being at both an individual and whole-school level. To this end, a very structured and positive school environment has been developed, where very effort is made to affirm pupils and to develop their confidence.
- The school benefits from the support of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator. Under this programme, a range of well-organised activities, classes and programmes are in operation, which are proving successful in involving and empowering parents to support their children's education.
- 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

- The school is carefully managed by the board of management. The board is effective in developing an inclusive and well-resourced school. It is recommended that greater detail be provided in the code of behaviour on procedures associated with suspension and expulsion.
- The principal has successfully developed a very efficient and very effective school environment, which is both nurturing and focused in its efforts to provide all pupils with a rewarding learning experience.
- The in-school management team works in a cooperative manner to promote and lead a range of innovative programmes and initiatives aimed at developing pupils' learning and confidence.
- In responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, all parents indicated that they think their child enjoys school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school systematically engages in a broad range of self-evaluation practices. Progress on school improvement plans is regularly discussed and monitored. Actions are clearly delineated. In some cases, targets should be more specifically defined in terms of learning outcomes at different class levels.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement and review of various educational initiatives and interventions.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The report was felt to be fair and balanced. The observations were comprehensive and staff was happy that good work was noted and remarked upon. Recommendations were deemed to be fair and practical.

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

Teaching and learning in oral language and writing will be tackled as part of our DEIS plan and school self-evaluation, and in light of the new Primary Language Curriculum.

Teachers will look at making greater provision for the range of ability levels in their classes in their short-term planning, especially for higher achievers.