

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Saint Mary's National School  
Rathowen, County Westmeath  
Uimhir rolla: 17189R**

**Date of inspection: 11 January 2016**



## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Saint Mary's 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 pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wishes to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Saint Mary's National School is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. There is a staff of three mainstream teachers, a shared resource teacher and a shared learning support teacher, both of whom are based in the school. There are sixty pupils enrolled and the attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The quality of pupils' learning achievements is good.
- Teaching is of a high quality overall.
- While most pupils read fluently and with enthusiasm, supplementary reading material provided for pupils needs to be matched closely to their reading abilities.
- While the teaching of pupils with additional learning needs is of a high quality, it needs to be supported by more effective planning and the use of a wider range of support models.
- The school is well supported by the board of management and the parents' association.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A coordinated approach to the development of writing genres should be implemented throughout the school, and supplementary reading material for individual pupils should be closely matched to their reading abilities.
- Ba chóir go ndéanfaí athbhreithniú ar an bplean scoile uile don Ghaeilge ionas go ndéanfaí cinnte go dtabharfaidh sé treoir chuí do phleanáil na múinteoirí maidir le forbairt teanga na ndaltaí. *The school should revise its whole-school plan for Irish to ensure it sufficiently guides teachers' planning for pupils' language development.*
- The process of individual support planning, and the tracking of pupils' progress through the use of the *Continuum of Support* should be implemented in line with best practice.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in literacy is good. A majority of pupils read fluently and enthusiastically. Care should be taken to ensure that all supplementary reading material provided for pupils closely matches their reading abilities. Pupils are achieving very good writing standards. In order to develop their writing further, a coordinated approach to the development of writing genres should be implemented throughout the school.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge inmholta. Tá dearcadh dearfach ag na daltaí i leith na teanga agus múintear na ceachtanna go díograsach. Ba chóir go ndéanfaí athbhreithniú ar an bplean scoile uile ionas go ndéanfaí cinnte go dtabharfaidh sé treoir chuí do phleanáil na múinteoirí maidir le forbairt teanga na ndaltaí. *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is commendable. Pupils are*

*positive towards the language and lessons are taught with enthusiasm. The school should revise its whole-school plan for Irish to ensure it sufficiently guides teachers' planning for pupils' language development.*

- Learning achievements in Mathematics are of a good quality. Pupils display very good knowledge of number facts. Concepts are well taught and learning is supported through good use of concrete materials. It is advised that mathematics lessons regularly include problem solving as an integral part of the learning experience.
- Pupils' learning in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) is commendable. Nonetheless, it is advised that a stronger emphasis be placed on local history and geography.
- Pupils in receipt of learning support are making good progress.

## **2. Quality of teaching**

- Teaching in the school is of a high quality overall. Effective differentiated teaching for the range of learners is evident in most settings. A majority of pupils agree that their teachers explain things clearly. A range of assessment is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are withdrawn for support. Models of in-class support should be included as part of provision. The process of individual support planning and the tracking of pupils' progress through the use of the *Continuum of Support* should be implemented in line with best practice.

## **3. Support for pupils' well-being**

- During the evaluation, the behaviour and management of the pupils was of a very high quality. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation, a majority of pupils indicated that this is a good school. However, a significant minority could not agree that pupils in their class behaved well. The school should address these concerns through its code of behaviour and its Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme.
- A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities which support pupils' holistic development is provided by the school.
- The parents' association provides very good support to the school. In questionnaires administered prior to the evaluation, parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with 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 for Primary and Post-primary Schools*.

## **4. Leadership and Management**

- The quality of school leadership and management is commendable. The board of management gives good practical support to the school. Meetings are convened regularly and roles have been assigned to members. The board should continue to oversee the cyclical review of all policies. The ancillary staff ably supports the smooth running of the school.
- The principal was appointed in 2014. She is committed to school improvement and to the holistic development of each pupil. The deputy principal very capably supports the principal and both collaborate very well. To support their very good work, an annual review of their duties in response to the evolving needs of the school, is advised.

## **5. School Self-evaluation**

- Good work has been done in the area of school self-evaluation. School improvement plans have been implemented in the areas of literacy and numeracy. A range of planned actions is evident in classroom practice.

**Conclusion**

The school's capacity to develop further and engage in school improvement is very good.

# **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 of St Mary's NS. Rathowen welcomes the positive nature of the report. We appreciate the reference to the main recommendations made in the report and will support the Principal, and staff in the actions they have taken to implement these.

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

Discussions and actions have already taken place re:planning for implementation of the main recommendations, namely the development of writing genres, matching supplementary reading material to reading abilities, revision of the whole school plan for Irish and the process of individual support planning for children with additional learning needs. A coordinated approach to the development of writing genres has been implemented. All pupils have a self-assessment hardback copybook in which they are recording samples of their favourite piece of writing in each of the writing genres. Teachers are currently carrying out running records of supplementary reading material to ensure it is closely matched to each pupils ability. The school has revised its whole school plan for Irish. We have included a list of questions, answers, phrases and supporting vocabulary per topic from infants to sixth class. Learning support and resource teachers have adopted the same individual education plan template. Weekly planning by Learning Support/ Resource teachers has been adapted to support pupils with additional learning needs. Both in-class and withdrawal support models are currently being implemented.