

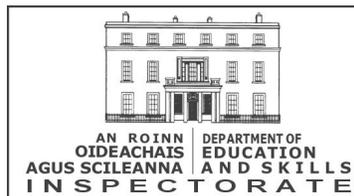
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**St. Michael's National School,**  
**Castletown-Finea, Co. Westmeath**  
**Uimhir rolla: 17606H**

**Date of inspection: 28 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. Michael's NS 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 acting 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 does not wish to respond formally to the report.

St. Michael's NS is a small, rural primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop in the Diocese of Meath. The twenty-six pupils are taught in multi-grade settings and their attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- There is very good teaching and learning in this school.
- The pupils are exemplary in their behaviour, their attitudes and their disposition to learning.
- The care and support for pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, is highly commendable.
- All staff members carry out their work in a spirit of collaboration and collegiality in this welcoming and inclusive school.
- The school is very well managed and serves as a focal point in the local community.
- There is scope to extend the pupils' communication skills in Irish.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- *Moltar aire sa bhreis a dhíriú ar úsáid mhodhanna oiriúnacha chun cur le dhul chun cinn na ndaltaí i gcumarsáid na Gaeilge i gcomhthéascanna éagsúla. It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on using suitable methodologies to ensure progression in the pupils' ability to communicate in Irish in a variety of contexts.*

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good. At all class levels, many pupils attain high standards in English and Mathematics. The school strives to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and are making good progress. The quality of the pupils' personal writing is very high. Their reading skills are very well developed through the use of graded-reading books. The pupils use Mathematics with confidence to solve problems and to record, explain and predict aspects of their everyday lives.
- *Tá cáilíocht chuí i labhairt na Gaeilge. Díritear aird cumasach ar úsáid áiseanna, dánta agus amhráin, agus obair beirte chun na heiseamláirí nua a mhúineadh. Chun cur leis an tús breá sna naionáin, moltar do na hardranganna, béim níos mó a dhíriú ar mhúineadh na teanga nua ó bhéal, ar dhaingniú na teanga foghlamtha go rialta agus ar úsáid na teanga nua i gcomhthéascanna éagsúla. Appropriate standards are attained in Irish. There is competent use of resources, songs and poems, and pair work to teach the new language exemplars. In order to build on the good language foundation in the junior classes, it is advised that greater emphasis be placed at*

*senior level on the explicit teaching of new language, regular consolidation of language learned, and the use of the new language in different contexts.*

- The pupils display mastery of appropriate skills and knowledge across various subjects, most particularly in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. There are stimulating displays of their work encompassing projects, investigations, personal writing and artwork. They perform a wide range of songs and poems with enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs are progressing very well.

## **2. Quality of teaching**

- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teaching is characterised by high expectations, excellent lesson structure, active learning and purposeful collaborative tasks for pupils. The teachers take full account of the pupils' varied needs and abilities, and use a wide range of methodologies to support the pupils' learning in an integrated manner. Teachers make good use of the local environment. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided.
- Effective assessment approaches are used by teachers to identify pupils' learning needs, to track their progress, and to inform and evaluate interventions. The emphasis on self-assessment by pupils is praiseworthy. The pupils' work is closely monitored and corrected.
- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Comprehensive support plans, at all stages of the continuum of support, are compiled in a consultative, collaborative manner. These comprise specific and relevant targets which are systematically reviewed. Support, both withdrawal and in-class, is skilfully delivered through dynamic teaching and meaningful learning experiences. The special needs assistant provides commendable support to pupils.

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

- The management and pastoral care of pupils are significant strengths of this inclusive and welcoming school. All staff members are praised for the skilful way in which they manage, support and motivate their pupils. As a consequence, the pupils are exemplary in their behaviour, their attitudes and their disposition to learning. In the Inspectorate survey, all pupils agreed that they like school and feel safe there, and that their teacher listens to them and explains things clearly.
- There are excellent relations and high levels of communication between the school and the parents. In the Inspectorate survey, all parents indicated that they feel welcome in school and that their child enjoys school and is doing well.
- 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 work of the board of management is commendable. The board ensures that the school optimises the learning experiences and achievements of all pupils and serves as a focal point in the community.
- The quality of leadership is very good: it is learning-focused and child-centred. All staff are empowered to contribute to school improvement and a collaborative, collegiate atmosphere prevails. The acting principal carries out her duties in an effective and supportive manner.

## 5. School Self-evaluation

- The school engages effectively in the school self-evaluation process. The staff collaboratively undertakes comprehensive evidence gathering and analysis, target setting and action planning which are having a discernable impact on pupils' learning.

## Conclusion

The school's capacity to **develop** further is very high.