

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

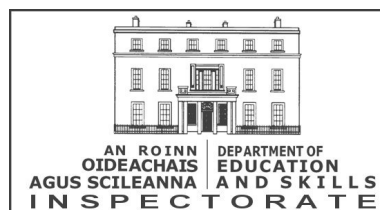
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**St. Mary's National School  
Grange, Co. Waterford  
Uimhir rolla: 17997C**

**Date of inspection: 30 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. Mary's National School 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.

St. Mary's National School is located in rural west County Waterford and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are currently 64 pupils enrolled in the school. 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

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

- A strong sense of community permeates the work of the school and there is clear co-operation and respect between the board of management, the principal and the teachers.
- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school.
- The quality of home-school relationships is very positive.
- The care and support provided for pupils is noteworthy.
- Pupils in all classes are exposed to a wide range of curriculum appropriate learning experiences that connect with and draw upon the school environment and local area.
- Commendable use is made of collaborative-learning methodologies and the pupils are active in their learning.
- The overall standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the school is commendable.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Tá gá le scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt trí dheiseanna cainte breise a chruthú. *The pupils communication skills in Irish should be developed through the creation of greater speaking opportunities.*

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall, the learning achievements of pupils are good. The pupils' standards in English reading and in numeracy are very good.
- Commendable attention is paid to the development of mental mathematics skills.
- Given the skill and commitment of the teachers and the pupils' interest in their work, there exists a potential for raising writing standards in English further. This can be achieved through the implementation of a whole-school approach to writing and the writing process.
- Baineann na daltaí taitneamh as na ceachtanna Gaeilge agus cothaíonn na múinteoirí atmaisféar dearfach i rith na ceachtanna. *The pupils enjoy Irish lessons and the teachers create a positive atmosphere during lessons.*
- Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in their learning.
- Pupils in all classes are exposed to a wide range of curriculum appropriate learning experiences that connect with and draw upon the school environment and local area.

- While teachers plan appropriately for lessons, all monthly progress reports should document the learning outcomes and achievements of pupils rather than the text books and topics covered.

## 2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is commendable with some skilful delivery of lessons observed during the evaluation. Praiseworthy use is made of collaborative-learning methodologies and the pupils are given opportunities to be active during their learning.
- A wide range of resources is used effectively to support teaching. Further investment in graded reading schemes should be considered to allow for the continuous development of this worthwhile approach to the teaching of English reading.
- While good use is made of interactive whiteboards during lessons, the pupils should be provided with further opportunities to use ICT in their learning.
- Teaching in special educational needs contexts is matched appropriately to the learning needs of the pupils.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá foclóir cuí ag na daltaí ach tá scóp chun forbartha i ngnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa labhairt. Tá gá le scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil tríd an scoil agus deiseanna cainte rialta a chruthú dóibh. *In Irish, the pupils have an appropriate vocabulary but there is scope for development in their speaking skills. There is a need to develop the pupils' communication skills systematically through the school and to create regular speaking opportunities.*
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is currently provided through a mix of withdrawal and in-class support. It is advised that further use of structured in-class support models be developed.

## 3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The care and support provided for the pupils is a particular strength of this school. The teachers interact pleasantly and respectfully with pupils. The pupils are co-operative and courteous and both confident and positive in their learning. The questionnaires administered to pupils demonstrate that almost all pupils feel safe in school and most pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.
- The quality of home-school relationships is very good. The completed parent questionnaires indicate that all parents feel welcome in the school and feel that their child is making good progress.
- 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 board of management is very supportive of the work of the school.
- Strong partnership, co-operation and respect exist between the board of management, the principal and the teachers.
- The principal is very committed to the school and diligent in the discharge of his duties. He is ably supported by the deputy principal and special duties post-holder. Engagement in a regular review of assigned duties should aim to ensure that the responsibilities allocated reflect the developing needs of the school, particularly in terms of school self-evaluation and curriculum development.

## 5. School Self-evaluation

- Assessment of learning is embedded in the work of the school. Teachers regularly record and monitor the pupils' achievements in English literacy and Mathematics.

Some whole-school analysis of the outcomes of standardised assessment also takes place. To ensure on-going school improvement, the school should develop assessment-for-learning approaches at all class levels, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

- The school has begun to engage in school self-evaluation, with an initial focus on numeracy. A school improvement plan (SIP) has been devised and definite actions for improvement are being implemented to good effect in classrooms. Further use should now be made of the evidence available within the school to identify improvement targets that are sufficiently specific in nature.

## **Conclusion**

The school has a good capacity to continue to engage in school improvement across the curriculum. The ongoing setting of specific, realistic targets in SIPs should lead to continuous improvements in teaching and learning.

## **Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

Our board and school staff welcomes the findings in our school inspection report which acknowledges the positive atmosphere in our school and affirms the good work undertaken. The board appreciates the high satisfaction rate among parents and pupils alike, and that all parents feel welcome in the school and that their children are making good progress.

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

The board welcomes the recommendations made in the report. We are phasing in these recommendations, starting with a review of how monthly progress is recorded.

