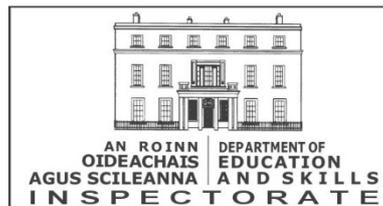


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Scoil Phádraig Naofa
Kilcurry, Dundalk, Co. Louth
Uimhir rolla: 18186Q**

Date of inspection: 01 December 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Phádraig Naofa in December 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 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.

Scoil Phádraig Naofa is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. There are 216 pupils enrolled and pupil attendance is very good.

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

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good.
- Pupil attainment in Mathematics and in many aspects of English are of a very high standard, which reflects a progressive and reflective school self-evaluation process, high expectations for pupils and very effective teaching.
- The local and global environments are used as highly effective stimuli for learning and are contributing greatly to the creation of high standards in learner outcomes in language, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education, and Arts Education.
- The quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was very good. It was of exemplary standard in many instances.
- Tá caighdeán den scoth ag baint le múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge. *The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is very high.*
- Teachers in the infant and junior classes of the school give pupils an excellent foundation in the key skills of learning.
- The principal's deep commitment to high standards of education, to the continuous improvement of pupils' learning outcomes, and to the creation of a culture where pedagogy underpins classroom interaction is praiseworthy.
- The well-being of children is prioritised within a learner-centred environment where pupils' achievements are celebrated and their academic and pastoral needs are nurtured.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Reading fluency could be extended even further.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good.
- Learning outcomes in numeracy are very good. Pupils' conceptual and problem-solving skills are very well developed in the infant and junior classes of the school and are further cultivated throughout their school experience. Pupils' responses to teacher and inspector questions displayed a very good understanding of key mathematical knowledge, highly commendable reasoning and a very good ability to reflect on mathematical strategies.
- Pupils display a very good use and comprehension of a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary across all curricular areas. They are exposed to a rich repertoire of poetry. They are confident and articulate speakers but there remains potential to develop oral expressive language still further. Pupils have developed very good word attack practices, phonological awareness and comprehension skills and they employ these

competencies well in approaching both familiar and unfamiliar text. They use context cues with discernment and make effective substitutions as required. Analysis of standardised test results and inspectors' engagement with the pupils demonstrate that there is potential to extend reading fluency even further. Pupils at all levels, and particularly in the middle and senior classes of the school, write confidently, with precision, enthusiasm, and imaginative flair. They show an excellent use of writing conventions and their written work exemplifies an appropriate use of grammatical structures.

- Ó thaobh na Gaeilge de, tá caighdeán iontach ag baint le foghlaim na ndaltaí sna scileanna teanga uile. Labhraíonn na daltaí go líofa, le foclóir leathan, le dea-úsáid briathra agus le tuiscint inmholta. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta ard acu agus is an-inmholta ar fad an chaoi ina n-úsáideann siad foirm chuí na teanga. Tá raon leathan dánta, scéalta agus amhrán ar eolas acu, rud a chuireann go mór lena gcuid saibhreas teanga. *In Irish, pupils' learning in all the language skills is of an exceptional standard. Pupils speak fluently, with a wide vocabulary, with effective use of verbs and with commendable understanding. They have a high standard of reading and writing and the way in which they use the correct form of the language is commendable. They know a broad range of poems, stories and songs, which adds greatly to the richness of their language.*
- The local and global environments are used as highly effective stimuli for learning and are contributing greatly to the creation of high standards in learner outcomes in language, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education, and Arts Education.
- Pupils in all classes and in all contexts are making very satisfactory progress.

2. Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was very good. It was of exemplary standard in many instances. This very effective teaching was characterised by teacher preparation of the highest standard, the judicious use of very suitable and focused teaching resources and the reflective deployment of a wide range of appropriate teaching methodologies. In particular, excellence in the teaching of Irish was observed during the whole-school evaluation.
- The quality of teaching in the infant and junior classes of the school gives pupils an excellent foundation in the key skills of learning.
- Teachers' commitment to maintaining high standards of teaching and their high expectations of pupils are in evidence in all classes. This is fostered by strategic conversations about pedagogy and self-evaluation that occur both formally and informally, and are led with insight by the principal. It is recommended that results in standardised tests be monitored and tracked at individual pupil level to ensure progression from year to year.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The well-being of children is prioritised within a learner-centred environment where pupils' achievements are celebrated and their academic and pastoral needs are nurtured. There would be merit in analysing the results from questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation and responding accordingly. For example, some responses from parents and pupils demonstrate a need for greater communication around protocols in relation to bullying.
- Differentiation of work for pupils in mainstream classes is highly effective. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' individual competencies and needs and adjust their teaching accordingly.
- Support teachers' planning is comprehensive and serves as a very useful guide to subsequent teaching. There is evidence of very effective engagement with mainstream class teachers and multidisciplinary agencies; this is having a beneficial impact upon pupils. Teaching strategies are effective and well-focused on the individual needs of pupils. To enhance this provision even further and to support literacy in the wider context, there is now a need to consider revising current support teacher caseloads with a view to prioritising early intervention models and increasing the level of in-class support.

- The special-needs assistants (SNAs) work conscientiously to support pupils. There is some scope to reflect further on their role with a view to actively promoting the independence of pupils.
- The recent building project and new configuration of the recreation areas has brought about a requirement for increased supervision of pupils in the yard. The board is advised to ensure that current supervision arrangements address fully the challenges posed by this new yard configuration.
- 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

- Examination of minutes of recent board meetings and related discussion with school personnel indicate that the board of management performs its duties effectively. It meets regularly and maintains detailed records of its activities. There is a clear focus on discussing the quality of pupils' learning at board level and this is praiseworthy.
- The principal's deep commitment to providing high standards of education, to the continuous improvement of pupils' learning outcomes, and to the creation of a culture where pedagogy underpins classroom interaction is highly praiseworthy. His work in leading learning and in creating a shared vision for the school community is highly effective. Under this leadership, a dynamic role in leading curriculum innovation and improvement is provided. A very strong culture of using Irish throughout the school in day-to-day interactions and in school assemblies has been created. An admirable sense of pride in the local environment has been instilled in the pupils.
- The principal is supported in the day-to-day management of the school by the deputy principal who fulfils her assigned duties with competence and diligence. The strong in-school management team has created a learning environment where teachers are empowered to think creatively, to contribute to discourse about teaching and learning and to lead aspects of learning themselves.

5. School Self-evaluation

- School self-evaluation has been informed by a strong tradition of school self-review, including previous effective use of *Looking at Our School* and currently of the *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Primary Schools*. This process has been further complemented by the school's experience of and reflection on international best practice.
- A clear priority has been given to developing effective home-school links that will benefit pupils' learning. Written reports, that include the results of standardised assessments and focused teacher-designed tests, along with regular parent-teacher meetings, provide parents with a comprehensive picture of their child's progress.

Conclusion

A very good culture of reflection, self-evaluation and analysis permeates all learning activities. Empowered by the current leadership culture and practices, the school has an excellent capacity to develop.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

We found this to be a fair reflection

- of the professionalism of our staff
- of how we deliver the curriculum
- of how we nurture the wellbeing of our pupils
- of how well the staff, pupils, parents and the local community work together
- and of how we create a friendly, welcoming atmosphere while keeping our standards of education high.

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

Through a process of review and self-evaluation the staff will analyse the reading fluency for ourselves and develop strategies to build on current good practice. This will be done in June 2015 for implementation in September 2015.