

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Boolavogue National School,
Ferns, Enniscorthy,
Co. Wexford.
Uimhir rolla: 18336J

Date of inspection: 04 March 2016



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Boolavogue National School in March 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 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.

Boolavogue National School is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic diocese of Ferns. The school has undergone a period of considerable change and development in terms of staff and increasing pupil numbers in recent years. The attendance of the 92 pupils enrolled is very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The overall quality of pupil learning achievements, including pupils with additional learning needs, is high; many pupils are achieving at very high levels with very high standards in Mathematics being achieved by a significant number of pupils.
- In English, while some pupils express themselves competently when they speak, others lack fluency and a richness of language.
- A commendable focus is placed on developing pupils' skills in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Music and information and communication technology (ICT).
- The overall quality of teaching, including the teaching of pupils with additional learning needs in both mainstream and support settings, is of a high standard, with some exemplary practice.
- Support for pupils' well-being is of a very high quality and is a significant strength of the school.
- The principal is a highly effective leader; the principal and deputy principal work effectively as a team to provide strong curriculum leadership and management of the school.
- A number of recently-introduced initiatives to ensure on-going improvements in pupil achievement levels in literacy and numeracy have been advanced.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Pupils' abilities to express themselves orally should be further developed through the provision of increased opportunities for pupils to elaborate on and critically engage with the views and the opinions of others.
- In order to ensure that classroom-based interventions in literacy and numeracy are embedded in practice, a system to monitor the implementation of the agreed actions should be established.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The pupils are achieving at high levels overall, with many pupils achieving at very high levels. The pupils present as interested and engaged learners and are provided with a wide range of learning experiences, including some commendable extra-

curricular experiences. Pupils with additional learning needs are also achieving at high levels.

- Very high standards of attainment in Mathematics are being achieved consistently by a significant number of pupils in the school. As part of the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, the school has focused on developing pupils' problem solving skills and praiseworthy work on the centralisation of problem solving in pupils' learning is underway. In their questionnaire responses, most pupils feel that they are doing well with at Maths.
- Pupil achievement levels in English reading are good, with very good standards being achieved by some pupils. In the questionnaires, most pupils state that they think they are doing well at reading. Pupils experience writing in a range of genres as part of the school's approach to developing their writing skills. While some pupils express themselves competently, others lack fluency and a richness of language when they speak. In order to enhance pupils' speaking skills, it is advised that their ability to elaborate on and critically engage with the opinions of others in English and across the curriculum be developed further
- Tá an-súim ag na daltaí sa Ghaeilge. Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach acu ó thaobh tuiscint agus labhairt na teanga de.
The pupils display a keen interest in Irish. Overall levels of understanding of the Irish language are good and pupils express themselves well.
- Pupils' abilities and interests are nurtured successfully across the curriculum. In SESE, the meaningful application of pupils' scientific, entrepreneurial and geographical learning to real-life experiences is explored through a comprehensive programme of very valuable activities. Pupils' learning is also extended through a highly innovative approach to integrating the school garden into school life.
- Also noteworthy is the pupils' engagement in Arts Education, with the quality of their song singing and instrumental performance in Music deserving of particular praise. The schoolwide emphasis on promoting the pupils' physical fitness through the *Active Schools Flag* initiative is commended. In recent years, the pupils' use of ICT to support their learning has been substantially developed by the school and it has received Digital School of Distinction recognition as a result.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching, including the teaching of pupils with additional learning needs in both mainstream and support settings, is of a high level, with some exemplary practice. The regular and effective communication of lesson goals and the high expectations regarding pupil engagement and achievement is praised. Lessons are very well structured with a focus on the development of pupils' skills. New content is linked effectively to prior learning and explained clearly. In the questionnaire responses, all pupils express the view that their teacher explains things clearly. While many good examples of active learning were observed, there is some scope to provide increased opportunities for the pupils to engage in collaborative learning and to play a greater role in directing their own learning.
- Teachers are reflective and open, and have enthusiastically embraced a variety of new teaching initiatives. They are praised highly for their regular engagement in continuing professional development in response to the needs of the school. This effectively underpins ongoing innovations in teaching and learning. The introduction of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the recent introduction of a graded and individualised approach to reading are commended.
- Members of the special educational needs team possess considerable experience and expertise. Their pupils receive very good support and care, which is delivered in

both withdrawal and in-class contexts. Class teachers and support teachers work collaboratively in the teaching of literacy and numeracy through the use of in-class support for targeted, need and skill driven interventions.

- All teachers maintain assessment records and some praiseworthy examples of assessment *of* and *for* learning were observed in a number of learning settings. To build on these good practices, greater focus should be placed on the further development of pupil self-assessment and the increased provision of good quality formative feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. In the questionnaires, almost all parents agree that teaching is good in the school.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Support for pupils' well-being is of a very high quality and is a significant strength of the school. The school is warm and welcoming and a variety of programmes and initiatives are implemented to promote friendship and well-being. Positive and supportive relationships are in evidence between teachers and pupils. The teachers demonstrate a well-developed awareness of the strengths and needs of individual pupils. Pupils' work and achievements across the curriculum are celebrated. The pupils are well behaved, friendly, confident and courteous. In the pupil questionnaires, almost all pupils report that they like school and confirm that they get on well with the other children.
- Through the *Green Schools* and *Active Flag* initiatives, the pupils are facilitated to participate in age-appropriate decision making. An analysis of pupil questionnaires, suggests that this type of activity is worthy of continued development in order to advance pupils' advocacy skills further.
- School management and teachers encourage good quality relationships with parents and the wider community. The parents' association and the wider parent body are highly supportive of the work of the school and actively support the implementation of a wide range of school initiatives. In their questionnaires responses, all parents express the view that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that the school helps their child's social and personal development.

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

- Leadership and management in the school is of a high quality. The board of management is supportive of the ongoing work of the school. Teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters are considered at appropriate intervals. The newly appointed members have prioritised plans to progress a substantial development of the school building.
- The principal is a highly effective leader and manager who fosters positive relationships across the school community. He exemplifies very good professional standards, encourages innovation and sets high expectations for pupil learning. In co-operation with the teachers and the board of management, he has ensured that significant progress has been made in advancing the whole-school planning process.
- The in-school management team consists of the principal and deputy principal. They operate as a very effective team to provide strong curriculum leadership and management of the day to day work of the school. Leadership and management

duties are also distributed among other members of staff who enthusiastically lead specific teaching and learning approaches to improve pupil learning.

5. School Self-evaluation

- A number of initiatives to progress pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy in response to SSE, are underway. The school is advised to ensure that targets are sufficiently focused and that recently introduced classroom-based interventions are embedded. A system to monitor pupils' learning achievement at the various class levels and the implementation of agreed actions should be established.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Boolavogue National School warmly welcomes the WSE-MLL report, which affirms of the excellent work of our entire school community; staff, parents and wider community alike. We particularly welcome the report's acknowledgement of Boolavogue N.S.' broad range of initiatives which enrich our pupil's educational experience, high quality support for pupil well-being, the dedication of our teachers and the effective leadership of our Board Of Management and in school management team. This is indeed a tribute to the professionalism and commitment of the staff.

The report gives the Board of Management the confidence that the work of the school is being carried out to a very high standard and gives us a clear direction for the future as well as recognising the significant progress made in our school by staff members, past and present, in recent years.

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

In light of the recommendations issued, the Board Of Management and staff have agreed upon the following:

- To review current interventions in place, so as to further enhance and embed them into teaching and learning.
- In order to develop our pupils' abilities to express themselves orally, the teaching of discrete oral language lessons will be pursued as well reviewing the development of vocabulary throughout the school.

