

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Scoil Naomh Mhuire  
Ceann Mhálanna, Contae Dhún na nGall  
Uimhir rolla: 18446Q**

**Date of inspection: 20 November 2013**



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

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Naomh Mhuire in November 2013. 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.

Scoil Naomh Mhuire, under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry, has sixty-five pupils enrolled. There are three mainstream class teachers and one shared support teacher on the staff. The attendance of almost all pupils is very good. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS, Rural Band), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. 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:

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are highly commendable and, in particular, very high standards are being achieved in literacy and numeracy.
- Teaching observed during this evaluation was of a very high quality overall.
- The principal leads learning very effectively and has high expectations for pupils' learning and achievement.
- The pupils display high levels of engagement, motivation and independence in the learning process.
- The Irish language is promoted and used very effectively in school life.
- The structured development of the pupils' oral language skills is excellent.
- Information and communications technologies (ICT) are used very successfully to support learning and teaching.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The *Aistear* programme should be implemented to develop the use of play as a central methodology in early years learning.
- Further station teaching and team teaching should be undertaken as part of the learning-support programme.
- A student council should be established to further facilitate pupils in expressing their views on school matters.
- The board of management should continue to seek the views of parents on school matters. Regular consultation with parents in the review of school policies is recommended.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good. They attain very high standards in literacy. Pupils read with commendable confidence and fluency. They explore a very good range of poetry. A richness of language is evident in pupils' written work. Tá caighdeán sár-mhaith le sonrú i bhfoghlaím na Gaeilge. (*Learning in Irish is of a very good standard.*)
- Pupils' learning experiences in Mathematics are very good. They have a secure understanding of key concepts and are able to apply their skills creatively across the curriculum strands.
- Pupils experience a broad programme of learning. Collaborative learning experiences observed in Science, History and Drama were very supportive of pupils' team-working

skills. Pupils' use of ICT, in the senior classes in particular, is highly commendable. While junior pupils have some opportunity to learn through play, the *Aistear* programme should be implemented to develop the use of play as a central methodology in early years learning.

- Pupils in receipt of additional support are making very good progress.

## **2. Quality of teaching**

- Teaching observed during this evaluation was of a very high quality. Feedback from discussion with parents' representatives and from parents' questionnaires, completed as part of the evaluation, provides a strong endorsement of the work of the school. In questionnaires, for example, all parents indicated that their children were doing well in school.
- Teachers work very skilfully and are innovative in their practice. Multi-grade settings are managed capably through purposeful planning which has a very strong focus on learning outcomes. Learning is scaffolded very well. Pupils are enabled to express opinions and to articulate problem solving strategies. The structured development of oral language skills is excellent. In Mathematics, the use of concrete materials is highly commendable.
- Teachers' ongoing assessment practices are very effective and ensure progression in learning. Useful criteria and checklists are provided to help pupils assess and improve their work.
- The teaching of pupils with additional learning needs, through a combination of withdrawal and in-class interventions, is very good. Going forward, further station teaching and team teaching should be considered. Some consideration might also be given to providing more challenges to pupils of exceptional ability. *Guidelines for Exceptionally Able Students* (NCCA, 2007) will be a useful reference in this regard.

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

- Overall, the pupils are managed very effectively. In questionnaires, all of the children report that they feel safe in the playground, know the school rules and get on well with the other pupils. Going forward, school assemblies should be held more regularly to celebrate the pupils' achievements. A student council should be established to further facilitate pupils in expressing their views on school matters.
- There are commendable opportunities provided for pupils to engage in a range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. At certain times of the year, external tutors, funded by DEIS grants, are employed to provide beneficial additional tuition to pupils. Valuable supports for families such as a book-rental scheme and school lunches are provided.
- Whole-school assessment procedures are highly effective. Parents are very well informed about their children's progress and are encouraged to support their children's learning. In questionnaires, most parents indicated that there are good arrangements for parent-teacher meetings and almost all are aware of who to talk to in the school if there is a problem. Overall, there are strong levels of parental satisfaction with the work of 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 work of the board of management is purposeful and members are well informed about learning standards and school attendance. The parents' association supports the work of the school through regular fundraising activities. While the board is commended for facilitating the recent establishment of a parents' association, it should continue to seek the views of parents on school matters. Consulting regularly with parents in the review of school policies is recommended. Further planning for the on-going development of school facilities, including the provision of ancillary accommodation and adequate car parking, is warranted.
- The in-school management team comprises the principal and the deputy principal. Both are highly committed to the school and to the pursuit of excellence in learning.

The principal leads learning very effectively and has high expectations for pupils' achievement. The deputy principal's contribution to the oral language programme is having a very positive impact on literacy standards. Commendably, all teachers have been given leadership responsibilities which are impacting positively on pupils' learning experiences. Questionnaire responses indicate that all parents feel that the school is well run.

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

- There is very effective engagement with school self-evaluation. The current school improvement plan is based on the effective analysis of a wide range of assessment data including qualitative data from parent, teacher and pupil attitudinal questionnaires. Targeted actions for improvement are positively impacting on pupils' learning experiences.

#### **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to develop further is very good given the very strong curriculum leadership and the reflective practice evident amongst the teaching staff.

## **Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

We are very pleased with this positive report which recognises the many strengths of the school.

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

Aistear: Class teacher and Learning Support Teacher to attend in-service with a view to introducing Aistear programme.

Learning Support Programme: There is currently extensive station teaching and team teaching in literacy and numeracy which will be extended where possible.

Consultation with Parents: B.O.M. is consulting with parents on Anti-Bullying, School Uniform and Exceptional Ability Policies.

Assemblies: B.O.M. intends to develop school assemblies as a means to celebrate pupils' achievements and to further develop the high standards in the school.

School Facilities: BOM is making an application for funding to School Capital Appraisal section of DES.