

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Fatima National School
Cloone, County Leitrim
Uimhir rolla: 18741S**

Date of inspection: 29 January 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

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

Fatima National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. The current enrolment of 56 pupils is accommodated across three classrooms. School attendance is very good overall. 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 contribution of the board of management to the management and maintenance of the school is very effective.
- The principal demonstrates very good leadership. She works in an innovative manner and has very good rapport with staff and pupils.
- The overall quality of teaching in both the mainstream and support setting is commendable with some excellent individual practices observed.
- The pupils' overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good.
- Mainstream teachers create stimulating learning environments with high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement.
- Provision for *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is very effective.
- A wide and purposeful range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities enhances the pupils' educational provision.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To ensure appropriate continuity and progression in Irish, a more structured whole-school approach to curriculum implementation is needed.
- Current arrangements for learning support should be reviewed to ensure that pupils with the greatest learning needs receive appropriately differentiated support in small groups.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are good. Pupils demonstrated high levels of engagement and co-operation in the observed lessons.
- Overall learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy are very good, as is also evidenced in standardised test scores. Junior pupils' emergent literacy development is very successful. There is highly proficient implementation of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. In the middle and senior classes, there is very high-quality provision for reading and writing. A common approach to the memorisation and recitation of poetry is recommended.
- Tá scóip chun forbartha i dtorthaí foghlama labhartha na ndaltaí i nGaeilge. Moltar cur chuige uile-scoile a chur i bhfeidhm chun an labhairt a fhorbairt. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí sásúil den chuid is mó. Ní mór, áfach, cur chuige uile-scoile níos córasaí a chur i bhfeidhm don dá shnáith seo. (*In Irish, there is scope for development in respect of the pupils' oral learning outcomes.*)

Whole-school approaches to oral language development are recommended. Reading and writing standards in Irish are satisfactory overall. However, there should be a more systematic whole-school approach to both strands).

- Pupils are making very good progress in Mathematics supported by the use of concrete resources and consistent whole-school approaches. The pupils' engagement in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education is good. Their environmental awareness is enhanced through various local and national involvements. Pupils sing well and participate in choral events and concerts. Their artwork is displayed throughout the school and portfolios are maintained; the quality of this work is commendable.
- In questionnaires, distributed as part of the evaluation, all pupils agreed that their teachers listen to them and explain things clearly. There was greater variation in their responses in respect of the use of computers during lessons, participation in group work and having a say in how things are done in the school; this variation in response should prompt further reflection at school level.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the mainstream setting is commendable with some excellent individual practices observed. Teachers manifest very good enthusiasm for teaching and work in a collegial manner. They have created stimulating, well-ordered learning environments and use information and communication technology regularly in their teaching. Going forward, further teacher specialisation should be promoted so as to share the considerable expertise that exists amongst the staff.
- Baineann na hoidí úsáid fhánach as an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil; ba chóir go méadófaí an úsáid sin (*Teachers make occasional use of incidental Irish; this should be increased*).
- All mainstream teachers provide regular and comprehensive classroom planning. In the learning-support context, planning quality varies from fair to good; a common approach to planning is needed. Planning for teaching and learning in respect of pupils with assessed learning needs is of a very good standard.
- Whole-school assessment of literacy and numeracy is careful and thorough. Going forward, there should be more comprehensive recording of pupils' progress in Irish. Some *assessment for learning* activities are undertaken.
- The quality of teaching observed in the support setting was commendable and teacher-pupil rapport was very good. Currently, whole-class units are withdrawn for learning support. This practice should be re-considered to ensure that pupils with the greatest learning needs receive appropriately differentiated support in small groups. Progression in learning for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Responses to parental questionnaires reveal a very positive disposition towards the school. Almost all parents indicated that teaching is good in the school and that their child is making good progress.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- During the evaluation, the management of pupils was very effective and they presented as very well behaved and enthusiastic.
- In questionnaires, all parents indicated that there was a good atmosphere in the school and that it was a well-run and welcoming place. All parents agreed that their children were well cared for and that school discipline was good. Most parents were satisfied with anti-bullying procedures.

- The school provides a wide and purposeful range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities to enhance pupils' educational provision.
- 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 effective in the management and maintenance of the school. The board should now consider disseminating further information about its good work by providing an annual report to parents.
- The principal demonstrates very good leadership. She works in an innovative manner and has very good rapport with staff and pupils. She cultivates a welcoming and secure environment for all. Other teachers, including the deputy principal, contribute very positively to whole-school initiatives. Ancillary staff contributes very beneficially to the day-to-day operation of the school.
- The management of day-to-day operations and resources is very good. However, an automated school bell system would be beneficial in signalling the commencement and conclusion of break-times.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very effective. Going forward, there are opportunities for additional parental engagement in curricular initiatives.
- The parent association (PA) works diligently to support school activities and undertakes various fundraising activities. In discussion, PA representatives strongly endorsed all aspects of school provision.

5. School Self-evaluation

- Whole-school administrative and curriculum planning is comprehensive. However, there is need now to plan a cycle of continuous review. There is opportunity for the involvement of parents in the review process.
- Initial work has been undertaken in respect of school self-evaluation; an improvement plan for literacy is being developed.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good, given the capacity and professionalism of the teaching staff and the ongoing support of the board of management and parents.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Fatima N.S. Cloone is pleased to note that the report affirms the high standard of management, leadership and learning in our school. It is important to us that our pupils are well educated in a well-run and welcoming environment. As a Board we are delighted to note that this is indeed the case as observed by the Inspector.

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

In relation to the recommendations made the Board now confirms that

- Arrangements for Learning Support were reviewed following the mid-term break in February as recommended. Pupils with greater learning needs are receiving appropriate differentiated support in smaller groups. Visiting Learning Support Teacher's timetables have been reorganised in accordance with the inspector's advice.
- The teaching staff has agreed to prioritise a review of curriculum planning in Irish for the school year 2014/2015 with a view to establishing a more structured whole school approach to same.