

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

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

REPORT

**Our Lady of Victories Girls' National School
Ballymun Road, Dublin 9
Uimhir rolla: 18911R**

Date of inspection: 4 March 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in Our Lady of Victories Girls National School in March 2015. 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.

Our Lady of Victories Girls' National School participates in the Department of Education and Skills' action plan for educational inclusion, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and caters for girls from second to sixth class. A variety of strategies to promote and monitor the attendance of the 164 pupils is implemented and current levels of attendance are very good.

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

- The board of management supports the work of the school in a competent and professional manner.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership to the school and fosters an inclusive school environment.
- The in-school management team demonstrates a high level of commitment to the school.
- Teachers work collaboratively to create a warm and nurturing learning environment and display very good classroom management skills.
- The parents' association provides very valuable support to the school and their high level of involvement is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are very well-behaved, participating enthusiastically in learning activities. They display very positive attitudes towards learning.
- Pastoral care and home-school communication are of a very high standard.
- The school's celebration of pupils' learning, particularly in the Visual Arts, is highly commendable.
- The work of the ancillary staff and the care provided by the special needs assistants are highly commendable.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- Sa Ghaeilge, moltar a thuilleadh béime a chur ar fhorbairt scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí agus úsáid a bhaint as leabhair leabharlainne shimplí chun taithí níos leithne léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil. (In Irish, further emphasis should be placed on improving pupils' communication skills and use made of simple library books to provide a broader reading experience).
- Greater provision for the differentiation of learning during all lessons should be implemented.
- A more uniform approach to classroom planning, which identifies learning objectives, assessment strategies and differentiation practices, should be implemented

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are high. Pupils participate energetically in learning and engage enthusiastically in a variety of activities. They have very positive attitudes to learning and work is presented with pride to a high standard.
- The quality of learning in Mathematics is very good. Pupils are provided with active and collaborative learning experiences and varied opportunities to discuss problem-solving strategies. Concrete resources are used to very good effect. Good emphasis is placed on connecting content to the pupils' life experiences. Pupils display a keen interest in Mathematics and participate enthusiastically in lessons. Strong emphasis is placed on the explanation of concepts, on mental arithmetic and on developing computational skills. Good provision is in place for problem solving. The school makes use of ability grouping. It is recommended that this approach to differentiation be reviewed regularly and used judiciously.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in literacy is good. Phonological awareness and speaking and listening skills are well developed. In most classrooms, very good broadening of oral language vocabulary was observed. This good practice should be extended across the whole school. While pupils demonstrate positive dispositions towards reading, the wider use of novels and differentiated reading material is recommended. Pupils engage successfully in writing across a wide variety of genres. The quality of pupils' handwriting and work presentation is very good. Pupils should be afforded opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) as a learning tool.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá scóip le forbairt a dhéanamh ar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí. Aithrisíonn na daltaí dánta agus amhráin go muiníneach. Tá sé ar chumas roinnt daltaí abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Léann na daltaí go hábailta, ar an iomlán. Tá an léitheoireacht bunaithe ar na téacsleabhair. Moltar úsáid a bhaint as leabhair leabharlainne shimplí chun spéis agus taitneamh sa léitheoireacht a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Ní mór deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltaí tuairiscí a thabhairt o bhéal agus scríbhneoireacht phearasanta a chleachtadh ar bhonn rialta.
- *In Irish, there is scope to develop pupils' speaking skills. Pupils recite poems and songs confidently. Some pupils are capable of constructing simple sentences and asking and answering questions. Pupils read capably, on the whole. Reading is based on the textbook. It is recommended that more use be made of simple library books to further develop interest and enjoyment in reading. Opportunities should be provided for pupils to recount events orally and to practise personal writing on a regular basis.*
- Pupils are enabled to participate in a wide range of learning activities. Many highly commendable exemplars of pupils' work and projects across the curriculum were in evidence during the evaluation, particularly in the Visual Arts and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE).

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is commendable. A range of active and collaborative teaching approaches was observed during the evaluation. Teachers employ a variety of methodologies and whole-school strategies in teaching literacy and numeracy. However, scope does exist to place greater emphasis on differentiating the curriculum to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- While all teachers provide short-term plans, there is considerable variety in the quality of planning. Where planning was very good, learning objectives were outlined clearly, activities were differentiated to meet the specific learning needs of pupils and assessment strategies were suitably explicit.
- Assessment of learning practices, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are well developed in the school. The introduction of aspects of assessment for learning (AfL) in some classrooms is commended. Teachers should examine opportunities to further develop AfL paradigms across all curriculum subjects and in all classrooms.

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Teachers for pupils with SEN work collaboratively with colleagues to develop programmes of support. Overall, planning is of a good quality with some very high-quality practices in evidence. However, in certain settings more specific delineation of objectives is necessary. Parents of pupils with SEN are provided with a copy of their children's individual learning plan.
- The learning-support teachers support pupils with additional learning needs effectively in both numeracy and literacy. It was noted during the evaluation that, in one case, a learning-support teacher had been tasked with providing whole-class tuition in Religious Education. This practice should be revised as it impacts on the time available for learning-support provision.
- During the evaluation, learning-support sessions were delivered in a very lively, affirming and stimulating manner. Very good emphasis was placed on the use of concrete resources. Current support approaches should be extended to provide further in-class support interventions. While some teachers in the support setting make very good use of assessment for learning and of continuous progress records, there is potential for the wider dissemination of such good practice across the entire support team.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pastoral care provision is of a very high quality. Pupils are cared for and supported very effectively. During the evaluation, they presented as very co-operative and relationships in the school were characterised by respect and courtesy. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicated that pupils feel safe in the school.
- A very affirmative and nurturing learning environment has been created for pupils. Strategies to promote positive behaviour, inclusion and Irish culture among pupils are implemented very successfully. Training has been received from the Community Law Centre with regard to pupil peer mediation and its implementation is highly commendable.
- The school benefits from the support of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) coordinator, who is shared with two neighbouring schools. A range of strategies and programmes is implemented very successfully to promote parental involvement in the work of the school and to help parents support their children's learning.
- 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 operates in a very effective manner and communication between the board and the other two primary schools on the campus is very good. Key policies are discussed at board meetings and their ratification is recorded in the minutes. The principal's reports to the board provide a comprehensive account of the wide variety of teaching and learning initiatives in operation in the school. The board is focused on ensuring that the school delivers a very good education to pupils. To develop communication further, the board should consider issuing an annual report to parents on the operation of the school.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership. She promotes a culture of distributed leadership successfully and places great importance on the learning of pupils. She creates a positive school climate where there is open communication and shared decision-making.
- A diligent in-school management team undertakes a balanced remit of duties across pastoral, organisational and curricular domains. Members are enthusiastic about introducing and developing initiatives that contribute to the culture of ongoing

improvement in the school. Their curricular leadership is impacting positively on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

- Communication between home and school is excellent. Parents are afforded many opportunities to engage in supporting their child's learning. A wide variety of classes is organised for parents through the HSCL coordinator. The parents' association actively supports the school and parental involvement in supporting literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. In responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, almost all parents indicated that they believe their child is doing well in school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school self-evaluation is good. The school engages in a wide range of self-evaluation practices, using information gathered to establish targets and action plans. A summary school-improvement report has been issued to the school community. When reviewing the school-improvement plan, there is scope to define more measurable literacy targets. While the school implements a wide range of initiatives and programmes to support pupils' well-being and learning, it is recommended that these initiatives and programmes be reviewed regularly to evaluate their impact.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is good. Current self-evaluation practices indicate openness to change and to continuous improvement.

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 Our Lady of Victories Girls' School welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation Report and notes that it affirms the high standard of management, leadership, teaching and learning in our school. The Board acknowledges the extremely high level of satisfaction indicated by parents/guardians and by pupils in the questionnaire responses. The Board wishes to express gratitude for the manner in which you engaged with us in the process. The Board wishes to thank the whole school community who contributed to the process.

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 of Management acknowledges the recommendations of the Inspectors, this will be addressed as part of our ongoing process of continuous improvement. The school looks forward to working on a more uniform approach to classroom planning and greater provision for differentiation of learning.