

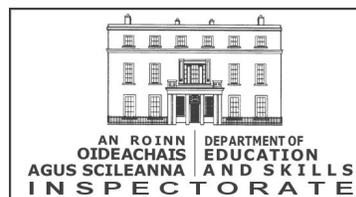
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

REPORT

**Saint Joseph's Girls' National School
Barry Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11
Uimhir rolla: 19015R**

Date of inspection: 30 September 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Saint Joseph's Girls' National School in September 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, pupil and teacher 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.

Saint Joseph's Girls' National School operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school participates in the Department of Education and Skills' Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme and receives support from the School Completion Programme. There are currently 186 girls enrolled across nine mainstream classes. Attendance rates are good.

The evaluation has found:

- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in numeracy is good. There is scope to develop the quality of pupils' language proficiency in English and Irish.
- Overall, teaching is of a high standard throughout the school. Further development of the in-class team-teaching model is required.
- Pastoral care provision in the school is of a high quality. Staff's interactions with pupils are positive and affirming. Communication between home and school is good.
- The board of management is committed to the on-going development of the school. However, there is scope to develop the board's work.
- While a school self-evaluation report and a school improvement plan for numeracy have been devised and an improvement plan for literacy is being formulated, the process of school self-evaluation requires development.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills in English and Irish should be developed as part of a cohesive language curriculum.
- There is need to develop the current model of in-class provision to incorporate more effective team teaching and to support the development of play-based methodologies in infant classes.
- The board of management should ensure that relevant curricular, organisational and legislative plans are in place and that the indoor and outdoor learning environments of the school are improved.
- The school improvement plan should incorporate clear and measurable targets directly informing whole-school approaches and teachers' practice in all settings.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall, the quality of the learning achievements of pupils is good. Pupils experience a broad range of curricular and activity-based learning activities.
- The quality of learning in numeracy is good. Pupils are provided with effective opportunities to develop reasoning and communicating skills. In some of the lessons observed, pupils were purposefully engaged in making mathematical connections to their real life experiences. Resources are used to good effect, particularly in the infant settings. Pupils' problem-solving skills in all strands should be further developed.

- There is scope to improve the quality of pupils' learning outcomes in literacy. While pupils' ability to write in a variety of genres is good, their reading skills should be developed progressively to ensure that they acquire a broader range of strategies to improve their reading. Pupils are afforded regular opportunities to engage in talk and discussion, however, there is a need to further develop the quality of their listening and speaking skills. A whole-school cohesive literacy plan should be developed to guide this work. Assessment data indicate that attainment levels in literacy have been decreasing.
- Cé go bhfuil sé ar chumas roinnt daltaí abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceistanna a chur agus a fhreagairt, tá gá le scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fheabhsú ar bhonn scoile-uile sa Ghaeilge. Tá chur chuige comhordaithe sna ranganna naíonáin ag feabhsú an chaighdeáin labhartha. Moltar an dea-chleachtas seo a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn scoile-uile. *While some pupils are capable of constructing simple sentences and asking and answering questions, there is a need to improve pupils' oral Irish language skills throughout the school. The development of a co-ordinated approach to the teaching of oral Irish in junior classes is improving standards. This good practice needs to be extended throughout the school.*
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of social and environmental awareness and care. They engage enthusiastically in other areas of the curriculum especially Music and Physical Education. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on skill development in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) lessons.

2. Quality of teaching

- Overall, teaching is of a high standard throughout the school. Where practice is very good teachers use a wide range of methodologies and assessment approaches across the curriculum. The specific expertise of a number of teachers in the teaching of literacy and numeracy should be shared amongst all staff members. In most cases stimulating and purposeful learning environments are provided in classrooms and displays of pupils' work are evident in some areas of the school environment.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Effective teaching in the withdrawal setting was based on well-developed individual and group educational plans resulting in positive learning experiences and good outcomes for pupils. However, there is a need to develop the current model of in-class provision incorporating more effective team teaching. This would support the development of play-based methodologies and the implementation of the *Aistear* programme in infant classes. Inclusive practices underpin the provision of support for pupils' well-being.
- Teachers' planning is of a good quality with agreed approaches in place for short-term planning and the recording of monthly progress. To optimise the overall quality of planning, short-term planning should outline differentiation and assessment practices more clearly and a whole-school approach to long-term planning should be considered.
- A variety of appropriate assessment practices is in use by teachers. Most copybooks are corrected and some teachers give good feedback. An agreed approach to correction and feedback is advised. Pupils' self-assessment was evident in a few classes and this formative approach to assessment should be progressed across the school.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pastoral care provision is of a high quality. Staff interactions with pupils are positive and affirming. While the work of the student council is commended, the capacity of the council to communicate the opinions of the pupil body effectively to staff should be optimised. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, show that almost all pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.

- Communication between home and school is good. The work of the parents' association committee is predominantly focused on fundraising, however, parental involvement extends to supporting pupils' learning in literacy, numeracy and Science. In responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, almost all parents agreed that they feel welcome in the school.
- The shared home-school-community liaison (HSCL) coordinator works diligently to implement a good range of programmes and initiatives. A strategic three-year plan with clear priorities is being developed to support and focus this work.
- 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

- There is scope to develop the work of the board of management. The board meets regularly and a principal's and treasurer's report are provided at each meeting. The board are committed to the on-going development of the school. However, there are significant issues to be addressed. There is need to address the current situation whereby certain school's plans and policies are in draft form or not in place at all. Therefore, the board should implement a systematic process for the review, ratification, monitoring and on-going development of relevant curricular, organisational and legislative planning in the school. Board members should assume specific roles and responsibilities to oversee and assist with these matters. There is significant scope to develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments of the school. Regular refurbishment and maintenance should be carried out in the school to enhance the teaching and learning environment. Ideally, the board should consider issuing an annual report on the operation of the school to parents. Financial contributions from parents towards tuition in the curricular area of Drama during school hours should be discontinued.
- The acting-principal fulfills her role with due diligence and is committed to the on-going development of the school. However, there are significant tasks to be undertaken which will require effective leadership from the acting-principal going forward as well as the full and active support of the board and staff. The acting-deputy principal contributes effectively to the daily running of the school. Regular review of this role to prioritise the school's curricular, pastoral and administrative priorities is advised.
- There are significant weaknesses in the overall quality of whole-school planning. While curricular plans are devised for most subjects, many require review to delineate content and to inform teaching and learning. Currently, the school does not have a policy for relationships and sexuality education (RSE); a policy should be put in place as a matter of priority.

5. School Self-evaluation

- While the process of school self-evaluation is underway, there are aspects that require further attention. A school self-evaluation report and school improvement plan for numeracy have been devised and an improvement plan for literacy is under development currently. In advancing the SSE process, strategic planning incorporating clear and measurable targets, co-ordinated actions and on-going monitoring are required. A summary school improvement report should be communicated to parents.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is contingent upon the systematic review and development of the school's strategic planning processes.

Published November 2015

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 is delighted with the findings that teaching and learning in the school is of a high quality and that staff interactions with pupils are positive and affirming. The Board is happy to note survey findings that parents feel welcome in the school and that communication between home and school is good. We are especially pleased that the Inspectorate acknowledges that pastoral care provision for children is of a high quality and that inclusive practices underpin the provision of support for pupils. It is encouraging to note findings that pupils enjoy their lessons and that the Board is committed to the on-going development of the school.

Recent cutbacks have impacted on the Board's ability to provide essential maintenance of the external and internal environment of the school but we are looking at creative ways of improving this situation. The Minor Works grant will be used to purchase paint to upgrade the appearance of the school building. Due to the moratorium on posts of responsibility there are no post holders in 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

On behalf of the school community, the Board of Management welcome the WSE-MLL Report and appreciate the recognition given to our supportive staff and parents.

The Board has already addressed some of the recommendations outlined by the Inspectorate namely:

- Draft RSE Policy has been approved
- Draft Health and Safety Policy and Safety Statement have been revised and approved
- Child Protection Policy and Swimming Policy have been revised and approved
- DEIS Plans for Attendance, Parental Involvement and Partnership with Others (November 2014-2017) have been revised and approved
- School Self Evaluation Report (November 2015) has been approved
- The School Improvement Plan for Oral language is being finalized by staff. All teachers have been implementing actions and strategies to help to further develop the pupils' proficiency in oral language since September
- School Improvement Plan for Numeracy has been reviewed and staff will formally adopt uniform approach to Problem Solving at next staff meeting. Staff members will share good practice at this meeting
- We are aiming to integrate the successful implementation of First Steps writing genres with oral language development and reading strategies, as part of a revised language programme
- The current model of in-class support has been further developed to incorporate effective team teaching
- Teachers have taken on board the recommendation to extend the good practice in Irish at Infant level throughout the school, and more emphasis is being placed on developing pupils' engagement and development of conversation skills at all class levels
- A whole school approach to agreed long term planning has been started in the area of SESE and teachers are on target to have this completed at next staff meeting in December 2015
- The incoming Board Management will develop a strategic 4-year plan for the years 2015-2019 and this will be monitored annually to ensure that targets are being met
- Time will be set aside for the systematic review of existing legislative policies and curriculum plans and to formulate new policies as required - this will include updating the school website to assist with communication of policies and plans to the wider school community
- Work is already underway to improve the external and internal learning environment in the school. We hope to have this work completed by spring of 2016

