

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

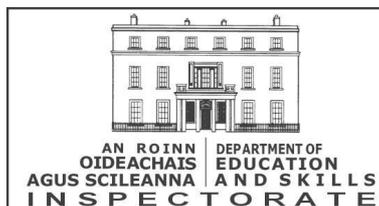
**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning**

REPORT

**Our Lady of Good Counsel,
Boys' National School,
Johnstown, Co. Dublin.**

Uimhir rolla: 19320W

Date of inspection: 17 September 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 Good Counsel, Boys' National School in September 2015. This report is based on lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal, the in-school management team, the special educational needs (SEN) team and with board and parent representatives, completed parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. The board of management of the school 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 is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance levels of the 432 pupils enrolled in the school are very good.

The evaluation has found that:

- a culture of mutual respect and inclusivity is evident and pupil behaviour is very good.
- the quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good and has significant strengths.
- the overall learning achievements of pupils are good, with many pupils achieving at high levels in the computational areas of numeracy and in reading.
- there is scope to provide pupils with more challenging learning experiences.
- the overall quality of teaching is good. In some learning settings high quality practices that result in good learner engagement are evident. However, in other settings there is an over-reliance on teacher input.
- a number of good quality in-class interventions have been introduced to address pupils' learning needs.
- individual educational plans (IEPs) are prepared for pupils with special educational needs. However, the targets are not sufficiently focused in all instances.
- the leadership provided by the principal and board of management is effective and the school benefits from good quality management.
- the organisation of staff into policy working groups is a positive development and presents a very good opportunity for developing distributive leadership.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To maximise learner engagement, all teachers should ensure that an appropriate balance between teacher input and collaborative pupil interaction is achieved, and that regular qualitative feedback is provided to pupils on their individual learning.
- Greater use should be made of differentiated teaching, and more focus should be placed on open-ended learning and higher-order skills.
- In individual educational plans (IEPs) for pupils with special education needs, targets should be more clearly stated and the review process should be formalised.
- The policy working group structure should be extended to distribute leadership for teaching and learning. The groups should review learning standards, agree explicit teaching approaches and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are good. Many pupils achieve at good and very good levels across the curriculum. Pupils experience a balanced programme of learning, including a good variety of extra-curricular learning. The school garden and environs greatly enhance pupils' learning in the SESE subjects. Sa Ghaeilge, tá caighdeán maith a bhaint amach ag na daltaí. Eiríonn le formhór dóibh iad féin a chur in iúl agus tá dearcadh dearfach acu i leith na teanga.
- Achievement levels in numeracy are good, with many pupils achieving at high levels in computational areas. Pupils' problem solving abilities have rightly been identified by the school as a priority area.

- In literacy, the achievement levels in reading are good. Although some pupils are achieving at high levels there has been a recent drop in the proportion of pupils achieving at these levels. The recent focus on pupils' reading comprehension skills is timely in this regard. A key challenge for literacy achievement is ensuring that pupils' outputs in writing, correlate with their achievement levels in reading. The recent introduction of specific writing genres is commended. A more sustained focus on each genre, with explicit focus on skill development and vocabulary enrichment is advised.
- The planned introduction of Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework, is a welcome development for pupils' learning in the infant classes.
- Individual educational plans (IEPs) are prepared for pupils with special educational needs through a good consultative process. Targets should be more clearly stated in all instances and pupil progress on those targets should be formally reviewed and accurately documented.

2. Quality of teaching

- The teaching in mainstream classes and SEN settings is of good quality. Some high quality, effective practices were evident during the evaluation. In these instances, lessons were well structured, content was effectively differentiated and the varied methodologies actively engaged learners. In other learning settings, there was an over reliance on teacher directed learning, resulting in lower levels of pupil engagement and diminished learning outcomes. To ensure consistently high levels of teaching and learner engagement, all teachers should provide an appropriate balance between teacher input and collaborative pupil interaction.
- Additional teaching emphasis has been placed on reading comprehension, oral language and problem solving. Where teaching was explicit and skill focused, the levels of pupil engagement and achievement were noticeably higher.
- A particular challenge for teaching, is ensuring that all pupils are adequately challenged in their learning. Some good examples of practice in this regard already exist in the school. Greater use should be made of differentiated teaching, through the provision of more open-ended challenging tasks and a focus on pupils' higher-order thinking skills. The potential for the use of ICT should be exploited in this regard.
- All teachers have an assessment folder and are collecting data on pupils' progress. Some very good assessment practices were noted during the evaluation including teacher rubrics and checklists, the sharing of success criteria, pupil self-assessment and the provision of detailed qualitative feedback. These positive practices should be embedded in all learning settings.
- The introduction of in-class support is a positive development in SEN provision and a number of good quality interventions have been developed to target pupils' skills.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The quality of support for pupil's well-being is very good and has significant strengths. A culture of mutual respect and inclusivity is evident throughout the school and the physical environment is attractive and welcoming, Pupil behaviour is very good and they are managed in a positive and affirming way.
- Pupil voice is effectively included in the consultation and decision-making process through the Green Schools' committee and the student council. Positive links are also made with the wider community.
- 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 leadership and management in this school is effective and is of good quality.
- The board of management is supportive of the school and fulfils its functions effectively. Importance is placed on pupil well-being and the board has strategically overseen the maintenance of the building and the development of policies. Commendably the board issues an annual report. In light of the introduction of School Self-Evaluation, the board should consider inviting members of the in-school management team to report periodically on priority areas.

- The principal effectively manages the school and provides good organisational and pastoral leadership. He cultivates a positive school culture, places importance on relationships and communication and has developed strong links with the wider community. He works closely with and is supported by, the competent in-school management team and other members of staff who willingly fulfil leadership duties. The staff is organised into working groups to oversee policy formation. Very good potential for distributing leadership and sharing accountability for teaching and learning exists within this structure.
- The parents' association and wider parent body are supportive of the work of the school. In questionnaires almost all parents agree the school is well run and that they feel welcome in the school. The board is advised to enhance the involvement of parents in policy formation and review.

5. School Self-evaluation

- Some good work in school self-evaluation has commenced. Evidence based evaluations in literacy and numeracy have identified oral language and problem-solving as priority areas. Improvement targets and actions have also been identified.
- Commendably, assessment data is collated at a whole-school level and has been used to examine learning standards and compare the overall achievement levels with national norms. The use of a neutral baseline instrument should be considered, to allow more effective whole-school monitoring of overall pupil achievement and greater levels of comparative analysis and data interrogation.
- The policy working group structure should be extended, in order to distribute leadership and develop shared accountability for teaching and learning. The groups should review learning standards, agree explicit teaching approaches and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is good. The sharing and implementation of the positive practices and the enhancement of distributed instructional leadership is key to this development.

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 and Staff of Our Lady of Good Counsel Boys' National School welcome the recent positive WSE –MLL report. It is a strong endorsement of the diverse strengths of the school, the many elements of good practice in existence and the high levels of pupil achievement. It is also testament to the input, commitment and dedication of everyone who comprises our school community.

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 in the report. These recommendations are being prioritized as part of our school self-evaluation and school improvement process.