

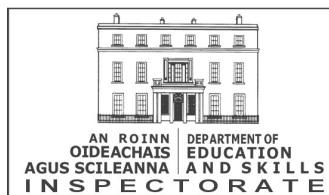
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Our Lady Immaculate Junior National School  
Darndale, Dublin 14  
Roll number: 19454U**

**Date of inspection: 01 October 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 Immaculate Junior 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 questionnaires, and a selection of school documents.

Our Lady Immaculate Junior National School is a junior mixed school catering for pupils from junior infants to second class. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It participates in Delivering Educational Improvement in Schools (DEIS) Band One, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school strategically monitors and promotes good attendance. As a result, the overall attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The quality of pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy is very good.
- The school is highly commended for the reflective and innovative manner in which it proactively engages with the implementation of various pedagogical programmes which include numeracy and literacy.
- Across all teaching and learning scenarios, lessons are characterised by very high-quality preparation and a focus on providing pupils with active, stimulating, hands-on learning experiences.
- Pupils present as contented learners, displaying a keen interest and focus in their work.
- The school principal, in-school management team and staff work collaboratively and earnestly to nurture a school culture which is both inclusive and engaging for pupils.
- Curriculum leadership is of a very good quality, being grounded in practical classroom implementation, continuous professional reflection and the latest pedagogical research.
- The board of management works proactively to provide a well-resourced school which is both inclusive and rewarding for the pupils.
- The parents' association and ancillary staff provide important support for the school.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- B'fhiú, i gcásanna áirithe, níos mó béime a chur ar fhocail nua a fhoghlaim sa Ghaeilge i gcomthéacs abairtí, ar dheiseanna chun an teanga nua a chleachtadh agus ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil. *In certain cases, additional emphasis should be placed on learning new words in Irish within the context of sentences, on opportunities to practice the new language and on informal conversation.*
- To further assist the ongoing monitoring of curriculum implementation, the school should establish a common approach to the recording of monthly progress.

## Findings

### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good. They are making systematic progress in their work with very good provision for the development of skills and concepts. The school places very good emphasis on providing a holistic education for the pupils, with a broad range of extra-curricular activities. While the school reports that there are benefits attached to meditation classes, it is recommended that the content of such classes be regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure alignment with the primary curriculum and its principles. High-quality exemplars of the pupils' work are in evidence throughout the school, including literacy and unique artistic project work.
- The overall quality of learning outcomes in Mathematics is very good. Teachers place systematic and focused emphasis on the development of number knowledge. Resources are used to very good effect, with hands-on activities, cooperative work and active learning experiences being employed purposefully. Overall, there is good emphasis on problem solving, but in some contexts, content could be further developed through problem-solving exercises. The school is very well presented as a mathematics-rich environment.
- The quality of teaching in English is very good. Differentiated station teaching is impacting very positively on pupils' learning in literacy. A praiseworthy emphasis is placed on pupils' oral language development with many examples of very good provision being made to encourage extended oral language for pupils. A very good emphasis is placed on poetry and rhymes in all classes. Well-stocked class libraries and the school library are successfully utilised in sustaining a keen interest in reading among pupils. Features of the very good practice observed include the use of levelled reading material and the systematic teaching of comprehension skills. Pupils are provided with focused and effective instruction in phonological awareness, letter and word recognition, and the concepts of print. The school adopts a consistent and structured approach to process writing which is successful in fostering pupils' motivation and capacities to write.
- Tá scóip chun forbartha i múineadh agus i bhfoghlam na Gaeilge. Baintear an-úsáid as amhráin agus raínn chun abairtí nua a mhúineadh agus chun deiseanna labhartha a thabhairt do na daltaí. Úsáidtear fearais agus modhanna éagsúla chun foclóir nua a chur i bhfeidhm agus, i roinnt mhaith de na ceachtanna, bhain na hoidí úsáid an-chruthaitheach agus fheidhmneach as drámaíocht agus cluichí. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh as na ceachtanna agus glacann siad páirt fhonnmhar iontu ach, i gcásanna áirithe, léiríonn na daltaí easpa féinmhuiníne agus líofacht cainte. B'fhiú, i gcásanna áirithe, níos mó béime a chur ar fhocail nua a fhoghlaim i gcomhthéacs abairtí, ar dheiseanna chun an teanga nua a chleachtadh agus ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil.

*There is scope for development in the teaching and learning of Irish. Very good use is made of songs and rhymes to teach new sentences and to give speaking opportunities to the pupils. Resources and various methodologies are used to present new vocabulary and, in many of the lessons, teachers made very creative and purposeful use of drama and games. It is clear that pupils derive enjoyment from lessons and they participate enthusiastically in them but, in some cases, they reveal a lack of self-confidence and speaking fluency. In certain contexts, it would be worthwhile to place more emphasis on learning new words in the context of sentences, on opportunities to practice new vocabulary and on informal conversation.*

### 2. Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching in the school is very good. Lessons are very well structured, being carefully prepared. Teachers are commended for their emphasis on appropriately challenging activities that have a strong hands-on component. To this end, resources are used very purposefully. Teachers make very good use of a range of methodologies. Overall, there is very good provision for cooperative learning. In a few contexts, pair work and calling on non-volunteers during questioning could be employed more gainfully. The quality of play-based learning in the infant classes is very good. Pupils' oral language, social skills and independent

learning skills are very well developed through the careful implementation of play-based pedagogies. All teachers write detailed monthly reports. To further assist the ongoing monitoring of curriculum implementation, the school should consider establishing a common approach to the recording of monthly progress. As there are irregularities in the timing of first breaks during the school day, it is recommended that all teachers review their class timetables to comply with *Circular 11/95, Time in School*. In some contexts, teachers' timetables should more clearly delineate cross-curricular integration to ensure alignment with assigned subject times.

- Assessment practices are of a very good quality. Teachers make use of a wide range of progress records. Overall, there are very good practices of assessing and monitoring numeracy, literacy and social skills. The possible extrapolation of these good practices to teaching and learning in Irish should be examined.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. Underpinned by careful planning and very effective engagement with mainstream class teachers and multidisciplinary agencies, pupils are provided with focused support. The staged approach to provision is managed and implemented systematically. The commitment of teachers to providing support using a variety of models incorporating in-class support and the withdrawal of pupils in groups or individuals, as appropriate, is commendable. A structured programme of early intervention strategies is implemented. The quality of lesson delivery in support settings is very good and lessons observed were clearly focused on addressing the identified learning needs of pupils. Teachers use a broad range of assessment strategies to monitor and record individual pupil progress including diagnostic tests, work samples and checklists. The current approach to individual education plan (IEP) construction is being reviewed to ensure that a common approach to IEP formulation is adopted in all SEN settings. There is some variety among SEN teachers about the scope and nature of their short and long-term planning. It is recommended that the SEN team examine common approaches to planning.

### **3. Support for pupils' wellbeing**

- The quality of support for pupils' wellbeing is very good. A very inclusive, supportive and nurturing school environment has been created. A strong emphasis is placed on positively affirming pupils' work and on building their self-efficacy. Classrooms are active learning places where pupils present as eager and happy learners. The respectful and courteous norms that exist throughout all learning scenarios serve to effectively promote and build pupils' happiness and confidence.
- A broad range of initiatives, aimed at the holistic development of the child, is in place both during and after school hours. The school places directed emphasis on healthy lifestyles for pupils, with all teachers revealing a keen alertness and awareness of the varying social, academic and personal needs of their pupils.
- The home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator works proactively to ensure that a broad range of focused supports is provided to pupils and families. Parents are actively involved in the life of the school and are provided with valuable insights on how to support their children's learning. A range of courses is provided for parents.
- 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 overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The school is managed carefully and prudently by the board of management. It actively and successfully promotes a school culture of inclusiveness and support for all its pupils. In so doing, it has been innovative

in successfully and creatively developing the school's resources and efficiency of operation. As a result, the school presents as a very well-resourced and stimulating environment.

- Being deeply committed to providing the best possible educational opportunities for all pupils in her school, the principal is highly commended for the strategic and innovative educational leadership she provides. She has creatively and successfully empowered staff to engage with a broad range of initiatives across curricular, pastoral and organisational domains. She is commended for establishing a school culture which is continuously reflective and inspirational in providing the most rewarding learning experience for its pupils.
- The in-school management team works in a directed, effective and enthusiastic manner to support the principal. It actively promotes a range of educational and pastoral initiatives, being appropriately reflective in this regard. It is recommended that duties pertaining to posts of responsibility be reviewed more regularly and that meetings of the in-school management team be convened more formally.
- The parents' association provides valuable support for the school. In responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, all parents indicated that they think their child is doing well in school.

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

- The quality of school self-evaluation is very good. The school engages in a broad range of self-evaluation practices. A number of purposeful programmes and initiatives are in place to develop literacy and numeracy standards.

#### **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to develop further is very good. Staff demonstrates a commitment to initiatives and practical interventions which will translate to successful pupil learning. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.