

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Scoil Mhuire,
Shankill, Co. Dublin.**

Uimhir rolla: 19497P

Date of inspection: 20 March 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Mhuire, Shankill, Co. Dublin 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 groups of teachers, the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed teacher, parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. 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.

Scoil Mhuire is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance level of most of the 317 pupils currently enrolled in the school is very good, however the attendance levels of a minority of pupils, remains an on-going concern for school management. The school participates in band 2 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS).

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

- the very good support for pupils' well-being
- the warm, secure and stimulating school and classroom environments
- the confidence of pupils, their very good behaviour and their high levels of engagement
- the very good levels of pupil achievement in literacy
- the excellent examples of teaching
- the effective implementation and tailoring of initiatives to meet the needs of pupils in this school
- the highly effective leadership of the principal
- the support and dedication of the board of management
- the wide variety of curricular, extra-curricular and social learning experiences provided for pupils
- the very good home-school links, the active involvement of parents in pupils' learning within the school and the support of the parent body.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To bring about the necessary improvement in pupils' learning achievements in numeracy, assessment information should be analysed to a greater extent to facilitate the targeting of specific areas.
- A formal system should be developed to allow teachers to share innovative teaching practices and expertise.
- A revised structure, using working groups drawn from across the staff, should be put in place to develop the school's identified priorities. This structure should also be used to enhance shared decision making and accountability.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils in this school are high, and the learning achievements and progress of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils present as enthusiastic learners and their levels of engagement are commendable. They demonstrate very good collaborative and co-operative skills and many pupils spoke with confidence about their learning experiences. In questionnaires, a majority of pupils indicated that they do not use computers regularly in school and efforts should be made to integrate ICT into learning across the curriculum. Pupils' learning in the Visual Arts and their project based learning in the SESE subjects is praiseworthy. In Music, the recent commencement of violin lessons for all pupils is part of a strategic plan to widen pupils' arts education experiences.
- The unique opportunity presented for pupil learning in infant classes is valued greatly and to this end very good use is made of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum framework. Early literacy and numeracy skills are also targeted through a number of well-resourced interventions.
- The school's improvement agenda over the past number of years has focused on pupils' literacy levels. There have been incremental improvements in reading over time and pupils are now achieving at very good

levels. The planned focus on comprehension skills in the senior classes is a welcome addition to provision and a specific focus on reading fluency is also advised. Considerable attention has been paid to oral language and good examples of pupils describing and presenting were noted. Pupils write across a range of genres and for a variety of purposes and the presentation of pupils' work is highly commended. To continue to build on their achievements in writing, greater use should be made of assessment for learning strategies including the sharing of success criteria, the use of self-editing checklists and the mapping of pupils' development

- In Mathematics, some improvements have been recorded in the attainment levels in recent years. Improving achievement levels in Mathematics is a current priority and positive steps have been taken in this regard. Pupils' facility with number is being prioritised and a number of team-teaching models have been developed. In a very small number of learning settings, great efforts have been made to capture pupils' opinions about their mathematical learning and this practice should be extended across the school.
- Sa Ghaeilge, i bhformhór na ranganna tá na daltaí in ann roinnt teanga a úsáid agus tá foclóir reasúnta leathan acu. Chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fheabhsú, moltar deiseanna laethúla a sholáthar dóibh struchtúrtha a úsáid ina leagtar béim ar úsáid neamhspléach na teanga.
In Irish, in most classes pupils are able to use some language and they have a reasonably wide vocabulary. To improve pupils' communicative skills, emphasis should be placed on the independent use of language through the provision of daily, structured opportunities to use Irish.

2. Quality of teaching

- Excellent examples of teaching were evidenced during the evaluation and the quality of teaching overall is high. Teachers are reflective and enthusiastically embrace pedagogical innovations in the best interests of pupil learning. Features of the most effective practices included, appropriate and engaging differentiated learning experiences, outstanding classroom environments and purposeful use of informed methodologies. Notwithstanding these positive practices, there is scope to develop the quality of teaching in a small number of learning settings. School management should ensure that the exemplary practices are implemented in all learning settings.
- Teaching in literacy is targeted, highly structured and is very well resourced. In numeracy, examples of very good teaching were evident during the evaluation, including the concerted teaching of number, the use of re-voicing and open-ended problems. The recent movement to mixed ability grouping and the development of an instructional framework are positive developments. To enhance teaching in mathematics, assessment information should be fully analysed and the instructional framework should be refined and embedded.
- There are some very good assessment practices in the school and the current development of a school-wide assessment policy will allow for practices to be shared amongst all staff. Good quality feedback is provided for pupils' work in some learning settings.
- The quality of teaching in special educational needs (SEN) settings is generally very good. A range of high quality interventions have been embedded and tailored to reflect the learning needs of pupils. Early intervention has rightly been the priority for the team in recent years. While this needs to remain a priority, opportunities should be explored to examine ways to provide greater support in senior classes. A formal structure should be put in place whereby members of the SEN team work collaboratively with class teachers to share expertise, analyse needs and plan interventions to make best use of the limited resources available.
- The planned review of the SEN policy is timely. The review should also be used to clarify the process around the setting and reviewing of targets in individual and group learning plans.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Central to all work and every decision that is made at every level in the school is the well-being of the pupils. The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. A culture of mutual respect is tangible in all interactions among the members of the school community and great attention is given to the maintenance of the positive school climate. In questionnaires, all pupils agree that they feel safe in their classes.
- During the evaluation, pupil behaviour and the levels of pupil engagement were very good. The school has recently reviewed its anti-bullying policy and employs a range of positive strategies to promote an anti-bullying culture. In questionnaires almost all pupils agree that there are clear rules in the school against hurting others by what they say and do.
- The school community benefits greatly from the services of an exceptional Home-School Community Liaison Co-Ordinator whose work enables the parent body. She actively listens to the needs of parents and responds appropriately in a variety of ways.

- 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 supportive of the school and fulfils its functions to very good effect. Members are very proud of the school and hold a clear vision for the pupils and the community that it serves. Commendably an agreed report is prepared at the end of each meeting. The wider dissemination of such agreed reports is advised.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership. She places importance on the nurturing of positive relationships, the promotion of high expectations and the cultivation of leadership amongst the staff. Her range of skills are complimented by those of the highly competent deputy principal. Together they ensure that the school is a forward-looking, learning community. The principal and deputy work closely with the assistant principals and this senior management team oversees the effective running of the school. Their work is supported by the special duties teachers who carry out their roles with diligence. The duties of all post holders should be reviewed annually to ensure that they reflect the evolving school priorities.
- To ensure that the vision for distributed leadership is achieved and that the collective decision making process is enhanced, it is recommended that a revised structure using working groups drawn from across the staff, be put in place to develop the school's identified priorities. This structure should also be used to develop a culture of shared accountability for driving improvements in learning outcomes.
- The parent body is very supportive of the work of the school. Parents are meaningfully involved in a variety of classroom initiatives. A commendable range of channels is used to communicate with parents. In questionnaires, all parents agreed that the teaching in the school is good and almost all parents agreed that they feel welcome in the school. To further enhance their engagement in school life, a formal process should be developed to involve parents in the review and development of relevant policies.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has developed a good self-evaluation process and has brought about significant improvements in literacy and attendance. To enhance future evaluations, the voice of pupils and parents should feature to a greater extent in the body of evidence. Greater analysis of assessment information will allow for greater specificity in the setting of targets.

Conclusion

Given the quality of school leadership, the skills among the teaching staff and the progress made to date on the school's improvement agenda, the school's capacity to bring about further improvement is very good.