

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Saint Brigid's Senior Girls' National School
Finglas West, Dublin 11
Roll number: 19929S**

Date of inspection: 16 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 Brigid's Senior 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.

Saint Brigid's is an all-girls' senior primary school 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 176 girls enrolled across nine mainstream classes and twelve boys enrolled in two autism spectrum disorder (ASD) units. Attendance rates are good.

The evaluation has found:

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including those in special educational needs settings, are good. While the quality of pupils' learning outcomes in literacy is good, there is scope to develop pupils' oral language competencies in English.
- Teaching is of a high standard throughout the school with teachers using an effective range of methodologies. Provision for pupils in the learning-support setting is good. There is scope to optimise the potential of the team-teaching models.
- Support for pupils' well-being is of a very high quality with a positive rapport evident between pupils and staff.
- The board of management is committed to ensuring the delivery of a high-quality education for pupils. The principal provides strong leadership to the school community supported by the in-school management (ISM) team. There is a need to review the roles and responsibilities of the ISM team.
- The school's engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) is of a very high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Teachers should develop pupils' oral language skills and competencies as part of the implementation of a fully integrated literacy curriculum.
- Learning-support teachers should optimise the potential of the team-teaching models through more effective collaborative planning.
- The roles of the in-school management (ISM) team should be reviewed annually to enable effective implementation and monitoring of the literacy and numeracy priorities identified in the DEIS and school improvement plans.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including those in special educational needs settings, are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and engage enthusiastically in lessons. Pupils have made commendable progress in literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of the pupils' learning outcomes in literacy is good. Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of writing genres and reading strategies. There is scope to develop pupils' oral language competencies.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in numeracy is good. They engage regularly in problem solving across all the strands. To optimise learning, pupils should be afforded further opportunities to explicitly connect mathematics to their life experiences.

- Ar an iomlán, léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Aithrisíonn siad dánta agus amhráin go muiníneach. Tá gá le scileanna labhartha agus scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Ní mór deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltáí scríbhneoireacht phearasanta a chleachtadh ar bhonn rialta. *Overall, pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to learning Irish. Pupils recite poems and songs confidently. There is scope to develop their speaking and reading skills. Opportunities should be provided for pupils to practise personal writing on a regular basis.*
- The pupils engage in a broad range of activity-based learning experiences across all curricular areas. They participate successfully in the Green Schools programme. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on skill development in History and pupils' knowledge of local history should be extended.

2. Quality of teaching

- Teaching is of a high standard throughout the school and there is a strong commitment to continuous professional development amongst the staff. Stimulating learning displays are evident throughout the school environment. Whole-school approaches to the teaching of writing genres, to the development of reading skills and to problem-solving strategies are evident in all learning settings; this is to be commended. There is a need now to further extend this practice to incorporate the explicit teaching of oral language skills so as to implement a fully integrated literacy curriculum.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Effective teaching observed in the ASD settings is based on well-developed individual educational plans resulting in positive learning experiences and good outcomes for pupils. The purposeful use of individual work, group and whole-class activities supports the development of social skills. There is a need to extend these good practices for all pupils in these settings. There is scope to enhance some elements of the physical learning environment in one ASD setting. Reverse integration is a praiseworthy feature of the school's inclusive practices.
- Provision for pupils in the learning-support setting is good. Individual learning plans are in place for all pupils in the setting. Commendably, teachers engage in both withdrawal and team-teaching models. There is scope to optimise the potential of the team-teaching models through more effective collaborative planning.
- A strong culture of planning underpins the work of the teachers. Collaborative approaches to classroom planning are evolving across the school. There is a need to contextualise these plans to each individual class. Curricular plans for each subject area are in place, the benefit of this planning could be enhanced by delineating content for each class level.
- A variety of appropriate assessment practices is in use by teachers. Pupil self-assessment was evident in some classes and this good practice should be progressed across the school.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pastoral care provision in the school is of a very high quality. A positive rapport is evident between pupils and staff and well-established school routines contribute to a sense of calm and order. Commendably, the pupils' voice is represented by the good work of the student council. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, show that most pupils like school and enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Communication between home and school is very good. The parents' association actively supports the school and parental involvement is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. In responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, almost all parents indicated that they felt welcome in the school and all parents expressed the belief that their child is doing well in school. The shared home-school-

community liaison (HSCL) coordinator works conscientiously to implement a good range of programmes and initiatives.

- 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 committed to ensuring that the school delivers a high-quality education for pupils. Communication between the school and the board is very good. To optimise this, the board should consider issuing an annual report to parents on the operation of the school. Consideration should be given to the further development of the school grounds as an effective outdoor learning environment.
- The principal provides strong leadership to the school community. She is dedicated, hardworking and committed to the raising of standards and to nurturing the well-being of pupils. In responses to questionnaires, all teachers indicated that they believe the school is well run. The willingness of staff to take leadership roles to support the implementation and monitoring of curricular programmes, initiatives and activities is to be encouraged.
- The in-school management (ISM) team has a range of roles and responsibilities across curricular, pastoral and administrative domains. Their work contributes to the effective running of the school. There is a need to review these roles regularly ensuring that they enable effective implementation and monitoring of the literacy and numeracy priorities identified in the DEIS and school improvement plans.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school's level of engagement with the SSE process is of a very high quality. The school's self-evaluation (SSE) report and improvement plan are well developed and are communicated to parents annually. Going forward, greater correlation between teachers' practice at individual class level and agreed whole-school targets and actions should be encouraged.

Conclusion

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

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 St. Brigid's Senior Girls' National School welcomes the content, findings and recommendations of the Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report.

The report recognises the strong commitment of the management team and the dedicated principal and teachers in ensuring that a high quality education is delivered to pupils and that a high standard of teaching is provided throughout the school. The Board wishes to express its pride in our pupils and is very pleased to note that the report highlights their positive attitudes to learning and enthusiasm for school life. The report also notes the positive impact parental involvement is having on the pupils' learning. The Board especially appreciates the very high levels of satisfaction indicated by parents and pupils in their questionnaire responses. The Board is particularly pleased with the affirmation of the very high quality of pastoral care in our school. Overall, the WSE-MLL was a very positive experience for all involved.

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 welcomes the recommendations of the WSE-MLL Report and has already put in train procedures to further enhance the development of the school. We recognise the importance of collaborative planning for team teaching and have begun work on developing oral language as part of our SSE process. ISM roles will be reviewed annually with a view to better supporting the DEIS and school improvement plans.