

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

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

REPORT

**Griffith Barracks Multi-Denominational School
South Circular Road
Dublin 8
Uimhir rolla: 20012S**

Date of inspection: 6 March 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Griffith Barracks Multi-Denominational School in March 2014. 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 and pupil 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.

Established in 1998, Griffith Barracks Multi-Denominational School is situated in temporary accommodation in the south inner city and operates under the patronage of Griffith Barracks Multi-Denominational School Limited. Two classroom assistants are employed by the board of management and all after-school activities are managed by the parents' association. The attendance levels of the 244 pupils are very good. The school is in a transition phase as a new build is imminent and on completion will house sixteen mainstream classes.

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

- The school is welcoming, has a positive atmosphere and parents are actively involved.
- Some very good teaching practices were observed during the evaluation.
- An improvement has been recorded in pupils' achievement levels in Mathematics in the last school year.
- Team-teaching has formalised the positive collaborative approach among the staff.
- A broad curriculum is provided for the pupils with very good attention given to the creative and aesthetic dimensions of learning.
- Pupils are motivated, enthusiastic and interested learners.
- A number of programmes, targeting specific aspects of learning, have been introduced in the infant and junior classes to good effect.
- Some progress has been made on key recommendations from a previous evaluation.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The link between the outcomes of assessment and planning for teaching and learning should be strengthened. Further analysis of the assessment information and the use of this information to inform planning and practice, will be critical in bringing about further improvement.
- It is recommended that the programmes for learning reflect continuity and progression from class to class, be sufficiently challenging for pupils and include provision for the development of higher-order skills.
- It is recommended that the SSE process be used to facilitate purposeful reflection and review on teaching and learning. It should provide a structure whereby whole-school approaches could be discussed, agreed, implemented and monitored consistently throughout the school.
- As the school moves into a new phase, the quality and effectiveness of communication at all levels in the school will require significant improvement.
- In order to make leadership more effective and to build capacity and foster a sense of shared responsibility among the staff, opportunities to distribute leadership and deploy appropriate tasks should be fully exploited.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are good with some very good learning in evidence. Pupils experience a broad curriculum and opportunities are given to them to learn both collaboratively and independently.
- Standards in English reading are generally very good and overall pupils are confident and articulate. Pupils reading at an instructional level is a very good feature of the reading programme in the school. The staff have rightly identified personal writing as a priority area for improvement. While some very good samples of personal writing were seen during the evaluation, there is an inconsistency in the standard of writing being achieved and in the teaching approaches being used through the school.
- An improvement has been recorded in pupils' achievement levels in Mathematics in the last school year and overall learning outcomes in Mathematics are good. Closer tracking of pupil progress across the strands will support further improvement in learning.
- Some very good learning experiences are provided for the pupils in SPHE, Drama and the Visual arts. In the lessons observed, the pupils' knowledge and understanding in SESE was good. Teachers should develop further pupils' ability to transfer skills to other contexts and to other situations.
- Sa Ghaeilge tá caighdeán sásúil á bhaint amach ag bhformhór na ndaltaí. I ranganna áirithe tá dearcadh dearfa acu i leith na Gaeilge agus tá foclóir leathan ar eolas acu. In anneoin sin, tá easpa muiníne agus líofachta i gcumas cainte na ndaltaí. Moltar béim níos láidre a leagadh ar dhul chun cinn scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí.
- *A satisfactory standard of Irish is being achieved by the majority of the pupils. In a number of classes the pupils have a positive attitude towards Irish and have acquired a wide vocabulary. Despite this, pupils lack confidence and fluency in using the language. It is recommended that further emphasis be placed on developing the pupils' skills in speaking in Irish.*
- A range of assessment practices is in use across the school including some focused assessment for learning and some good summative approaches. In some classes, the assessment information was used effectively to differentiate learning for the various ability levels of the pupils.
- The tracking of the progress of pupils with special educational needs together with the improved clarity in the learning targets set for them, is enabling teachers to determine more readily the actual progress being made by the pupils.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good practices evident. The very good practices include: the setting of clear objectives and high expectations for learning; the use of focused differentiated approaches based on assessment information; effective feedback to pupil; the pitching of pupil work at a sufficiently challenging level; a focus on higher order-learning skills; and the appropriate use of resources. These practices should be implemented consistently through the school
- Learning environments are very good and thematic teaching is a strength. A commendable feature of practice is the team-teaching approach which was introduced to enable teachers to address pupils' different learning needs.
- While curricular policies are in place stronger links need to be made between the whole school plans and individual classroom programmes. It is essential that there is clear continuity and progression in the programmes of learning from class to class.

- Elements of the Aistear framework are in use in the infant and junior classrooms providing a more play-based approach to teaching. Early intervention is a key feature of practice at this level and a number of programmes targeting specific aspects of learning have been introduced to good effect.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Overall pupils are very well managed. Pupil behaviour is very good and pupils present as enthusiastic, interested and motivated. Questionnaires were administered during the evaluation. A significant proportion of pupils reported in these questionnaires that they didn't know if fellow pupils behaved well. Some further clarification regarding expectations of behaviour is required.
- Pupil participation in decision-making is facilitated through the Green schools committee and the Student Dáil. It is recommended that the Student Dáil be used more effectively to teach democratic processes and to enhance pupil involvement.
- Many opportunities for celebrating are afforded to the pupils and they participate in a wide range of co-curricular and after-school activities.
- The individual welfare and care of pupils is given much time and attention.
- 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 are some strengths evident in the leadership and management of the school.
- The Board of management is properly constituted and meets regularly. It is committed to managing the school effectively and to providing appropriate and regular oversight for teaching and learning. The board has put in place some systems to improve its operations, for example, a financial tracking system, and policies are regularly reviewed and discussed. However, ongoing attention must be given to the health and safety issues on this very restricted site. An ethos review, initiated by the Patron and run through its Ethics Committee, was carried out in 2013 and the board has begun the process of implementing the recommendations therein.
- The principal has good relationships with parents and is clearly dedicated to the promotion of the school's ethos. Almost all parents report that the school is well run, is welcoming and has a good atmosphere. The principal primarily has developed a range of school policy documents and she has facilitated the introduction of a number of teaching initiatives. While the in-school management team members carry out their duties very well, there is a need to develop a shared leadership approach to build capacity, promote cohesion and foster a sense of shared responsibility and accountability for the work of the school
- As the school moves into a new phase, the quality and effectiveness of communication at all levels, involving board, principal and teachers, in the school will require significant improvement. Open communication processes that foster mutual trust would facilitate the development of a shared sense of purpose, the better implementation of agreed decisions and policies, and improved relationships.
- In light of the school expansion, it is also recommended that the board, together with the principal and staff, would draw up a five year plan for the future of the school to provide guidance and direction for all members of the school community.

5. School Self-Evaluation

- A positive start to school self-evaluation has been made. A school improvement plan for numeracy was drawn up and implemented in 2013 and a plan to target literacy is currently under development.
- To strengthen the school self-evaluation process it is recommended that: a more detailed analysis of a broader range of evidence be undertaken; that more focused targets be set to reflect the areas requiring improvement; that a clearer set of actions be identified to guide teaching at every class level and that a formal system of monitoring be put in place to assess progress.

Conclusion

Members of the school community demonstrate a willingness and an ability to bring about improvement.

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, the Principal and the school staff welcome this Whole School Evaluation (WSE) report. We offer our gratitude to the Inspectorate for the support, encouragement and professionalism displayed during the WSE visits. We are proud of the many positives which have been highlighted in the report. We value the insights and recommendations made which will be implemented as we develop our five year plan. We hope to build on our successes to date. We also welcome the five main areas of recommendation which are indeed areas of priority for us, particularly as we head into our likely new build phase and all the change that will give it will give rise to.

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 accepts the findings of the report and is committed to addressing the various recommendations. For example, some follow up actions planned or already undertaken since the completion of the inspection to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection include:

Inclusive Education: We are working on an Inclusive education programme throughout the school to help all the children feel valued and included. This commenced at the beginning of September 2014 and will continue throughout the year and beyond.

Student Dáil: After a process of self-assessment, including a whole school questionnaire, the Student Dáil has implemented a number of changes. These include more regular meetings, carrying over members of the Student Dáil from year to year and producing a newsletter at the end of the year listing changes and initiatives achieved by the Dáil.

Health and Safety: This area remains a particular focus given the nature of our site and its temporary accommodation. We have implemented changes in terms of vehicular and pedestrian access to school.

Effective communications: The effectiveness of communications is judged by how well it helps and supports the school community in the life of the school. The Board is particularly conscious of our needs in this regard as we plan for the new school build and our time in temporary accommodation. For example, we are using focus groups, in 2014/15, in the area of Literacy, Numeracy, Gaeilge and Inclusive Education as a way of formulating clear, structured approaches in these areas with clear continuity and communication throughout the school community.