Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Mhuire agus Chormaic
Kilcormac, Co. Offaly
Uimhir rolla: 20387P

Date of inspection: 27 January 2016
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Mhuire agus Chormaic in January 2016. 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 accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board’s response is submitted below.

Scoil Mhuire agus Chormaic is a Catholic, co-educational primary school that operates under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. The school was founded in 2011 as a result of the amalgamation of the two primary schools in Kilcormac (St. Cormac’s Boys and Scoil Mhuire Girls). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) as a rural primary school. Since the amalgamation, the enrolment has increased steadily and there are currently 108 pupils enrolled across four mainstream classrooms. The overall attendance of pupils is good.

The evaluation has found:

- The overall management of the school is commendable.
- The principal, who provides effective leadership, is well supported by the in-school management team who have an appropriate balance of roles.
- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. Pupils’ learning would be further enhanced by a greater focus on the development of their investigative and communicative skills.
- The overall learning achievements of pupils in Mathematics are good.
- Teachers are commended on having adopted a common approach to classroom planning. Learning objectives, and plans for assessment and differentiation are currently broad in nature.
- The school has engaged systematically and effectively in the school self-evaluation process.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Teachers’ planning should include greater specificity in relation to learning objectives, differentiation and assessment.
- To further progress the quality of the pupils’ writing, the school should implement a cyclical approach to teaching genres and make greater provision for the revision stage of the writing process.
- In SESE, teachers should make greater provision for both skills-based and investigative learning.
- Teachers should make greater provision for the communicative approach in their teaching of Irish. B’thiú úsáid an chur chuige cumarsáideach a leathnú i műineadh na Gaeilge.
Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are good. As indicated in the pupil responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire, most pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Learning outcomes in numeracy are good. Pupils apply themselves well to practical activities in mathematics-rich environments. Most pupils demonstrate good knowledge of basic number facts. Their understanding of mathematical concepts is enhanced through the use of resources and by teachers relating mathematical concepts to their everyday lives. All teachers make very good provision for the incremental teaching of subject-specific vocabulary and encourage pupils to share their mathematical thinking.
- The quality of pupils' attainment in English is good. A whole-school emphasis on the development of oral-language skills enables most pupils to express themselves confidently. The whole-school approach to guided reading enables them to engage with reading material that is appropriately challenging. As they progress through the school, they would benefit from more explicit teaching of reading skills. Across the school, pupils are enabled to write in a variety of genres and also engage in functional writing. To further progress the quality of their writing, consideration should be given to implementing a cyclical approach to teaching genres that makes greater provision the revision stage of the writing process.
- Mar atá aitheanta ag an scoil, tá scóip chun caighdeán na Gaeilge a fheabhsú. Cuirtear béim chuí ar fhilíocht agus amhráin, agus ar fhoclóir nua a fhoghlaí. B’fhéidir úsáid an chur chuige cumarsáideach a leathnú chuimhneachta na ndaltaí a fhóraírt agus a chur ar a gcumas a gcuireann an chur chuige cumarsáideach a fhóraírt a thullleadh.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. In all classroom settings, the learning environment is print-rich and hosts a good range of displays to support the pupils' learning. In Music, tuition is provided by an external tutor. Teachers should ensure that all pupils experience a broad, balanced and incremental programme in Music in line with the Primary Curriculum 1999.
- The primary pedagogical approach in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) is didactic and, in order to enhance the development of the pupils' investigative skills, teachers should extend their provision for scaffolded, enquiry-based learning. As reflected in the pupil responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire, there is scope to extend the provision for collaborative learning and for the use of information technologies as a learning tool.
- Assessment practices are of a good quality. Teachers employ a range of assessment strategies including tests, checklists and worksamples. To build upon this good work, teachers should extend their provision for formative assessment and also use assessment data to enhance their provision for differentiation.
- Teachers are commended on having adopted a common approach to classroom planning. To further progress this good work, they should ensure that these plans are underpinned by explicit learning objectives and make more specific provision for differentiation and assessment.
- Overall, the quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support is provided in both classrooms and attractive withdrawal settings. It is recommended that teachers' plans be informed by specific and measurable targets based on the pupils' diagnosed needs and other assessment evidence.
3. Support for pupils’ well-being

- The management of pupils is very good. The school presents as a warm, welcoming, inclusive environment and all teachers demonstrate commitment to the pupils’ pastoral care. In their responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all pupils indicate that they have learnt about different kinds of bullying. Pupil attendance patterns are monitored and the school implements strategies to promote regular school attendance.
- The school promotes an open-door policy for parents and, in their responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents agree that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that they feel welcome. The Parents’ Association provides valuable support to the school through organising fundraising activities, which are linked to school initiatives, and talks for parents. The parents’ room is an attractive, welcoming environment.
- 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 in the school is commendable. The board, which is properly constituted, is effective in its work. Recent priorities of the board have included building projects and celebrations for the school’s 50th Anniversary. The board is commended on taking an active role in the review of school policies and in facilitating teacher career and professional development (CPD). Consideration should be given to providing an annual report to parents.
- The principal provides commendable leadership to the school and manages the day-to-day running of the school efficiently. She demonstrates effective instructional leadership and promotes the implementation of whole-school initiatives successfully. She is very well supported by the in-school management team whose roles include an appropriate balance of curriculum, administrative and pastoral duties.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school is commended on its systematic engagement in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. The data collected, which is shared with the board, has formed the basis for school improvement targets and the adoption of whole-school initiatives in both numeracy and literacy. In line with good practice, the school publishes an SSE report.

Conclusion

The school’s capacity to develop further is very good. The teachers present as reflective practitioners who are keen to develop their pedagogy. The board demonstrates a good insight into learning achievements and school priorities for 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 of Scoil Mhuire agus Chormaic welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation-MML Report which affirms our governance procedures, competent leadership, effective school management, high quality standards in teaching and learning and high levels of pupil and parent satisfaction.

The Board welcomes that the report recognises the school’s strengths in relation to the dedication and professionalism of staff.

The Board is very pleased that the school’s dedication and commitment to children with special education needs is valued and acknowledged.

The Board is pleased that mutual respect and a positive culture was evident in the school. Confirmation that the school is compliant with Child Protection Procedures and is engaging successfully with Whole School Planning and the School Self Evaluation processes was very reassuring and affirming.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Teachers will strive to be more mindful of specific learning objectives but are assured by the Inspector’s reaction to our unitary approach to whole school planning.

Having engaged in an ongoing review of our English policy, we will prioritise the area of writing for Curriculum review.

Teachers will endeavour to make greater provision for a variety of methodologies in the teaching of SESE.

Táimid an-bhródúil as an bhfuinneamh agus as an dearcadh dearfach atá ag na múinteoirí i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil seo.

Táimid lán-toilteanach cur leis an méid atá déanta go dtí seo agus déanfaimid ár seacht ndicheall níos mó béime a chur ar labhairt na Gaeilge sa scoil seo.