

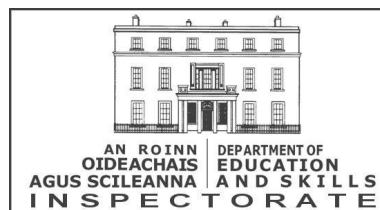
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

REPORT

**Canal Way Educate Together NS
Basin Street Upper Dublin 8
Uimhir rolla: 20430N**

Date of inspection: 12 October 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Canal Way ETNS in October 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. 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.

Canal Way ETNS, under the Patronage of Educate Together, was established in 2013 and moved to its current premises in Basin Street Upper in September 2014. The school population has grown rapidly in the two years. In this early start-up phase, the majority of the 153 pupils enrolled are in junior and senior infants. There is one first class of 28 pupils and the remaining children are in a multi-grade class of second, third and fourth. Projected enrolment figures indicate that the school could grow substantially in the next few years. A full-time learning support/resource post LS/RT was sanctioned in September 2015 and some part-time resource hours have also been allocated.

The evaluation has found that:

- A very positive, welcoming environment has been created and pupils and teachers have a sense of community and belonging to the school.
- The ethos of the school is evidently lived out in the day-to-day practices and is reflected clearly in all school policies.
- The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching in evidence.
- A wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided.
- The leadership and management of the school are highly effective.
- A vision for the school and its future is clearly articulated by the principal and this strong sense of purpose is shared by the board, the teaching staff and the parent body.
- Relationships across the school community are positive and a climate of trust, inclusion and mutual respect is fostered and promoted.
- A challenge for the school, as it expands rapidly, is to ensure that teaching practices and learning experiences are developmental from class to class.
- There is very good support for pupils' well-being
- A positive code of behaviour is in place and pupil behaviour is generally good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The ongoing close monitoring of pupil progress and the use of assessment information to inform the teaching and the learning activities, is recommended.
- A greater emphasis on exploring and talking in small groups about concepts and problems in mathematics and on regular consolidation would improve the quality of the learning.
- Moltar clár uile scoile bunaithe ar éisteacht agus labhairt na Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm i ngach rang chun caighdeán foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a uasmhéidiú.
- It is recommended that the staff use the School Self-Evaluation process to help them to slowly and effectively embed agreed approaches through the school.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall, pupils are making good progress and they engage in a broad range of learning experiences across the curriculum. A classroom has been furnished and equipped to

facilitate play methodologies in the infant classes, as recommended in the *Aistear Curriculum Framework*. Good use is being made of this resource to develop language, socialisation and thinking skills and there is significant potential to deepen the learning further. Pupils are engaging with mathematical concepts in a practical way through the *Ready Set Go Maths programme* at the infant level and through a range of mathematical activities in other classes. A greater emphasis on exploring and talking about concepts and problems in mathematics in small groups and on regular consolidation would improve the quality of the learning.

- Pupils display good emergent writing, reading and initial phonics skills at the infant level. An effective guided reading approach is used in the junior and middle classes to cater for the range of ability levels and the focus on using a *real books* approach is impacting positively on pupils' motivation and interest in reading. Pupils in these classes also demonstrate good writing skills in a variety of genres and regularly engage in free writing. The whole-school plan for literacy that is currently being developed should foster an instructional approach to all aspects of literacy development that would support and inform practice at each class level.
- Aithníonn na hoidí go bhfuil gá caighdeán foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a uasmhéidiú. Chun é seo a bhaint amach, moltar clár uile scoile, bunaithe ar éisteacht agus labhairt a chur i bhfeidhm i ngach rang agus deiseanna labhartha a thabhairt go rialta do na daltaí.
- Lessons observed in Social Personal and Health Education, Social Environmental and Scientific Education and Physical Education indicate that some very good learning experiences are being provided in these areas of the curriculum. Similarly pupils are exposed to a varied music programme which includes opportunities to explore and develop percussion skills.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching, including the teaching of pupils with special education needs, is of a high quality with some very good teaching skills in evidence. Responses from the questionnaires indicate that the majority of parents agree that teaching is good in the school. There is a high level of planning and preparation for lessons and classroom environments are attractive and well organised.
- Lessons are generally well structured and paced and provide good opportunities for building on previous learning. The very good lessons witnessed were informed by clear learning intentions with explicit teaching of concepts and high levels of meaningful pupil engagement. Some excellent teaching in small groups was also observed. These good practices should be shared and disseminated. Some very good assessment approaches are in use and learning outcomes were consistently better where teaching responded to identified learning needs. The ongoing monitoring of pupil progress and the use of assessment information in a systematic way to inform the teaching is recommended.
- Some aspects of the Special Education Needs SEN programme are in place and as the this Department becomes properly established there will be an opportunity to explore how team and co-teaching could be developed in the school.

3. Support for Pupils' Well being

- Pupils are valued members of the school community and are treated with fairness and respect. Their pastoral needs are managed effectively and their holistic development is nurtured. In the questionnaire returns the majority of parents report that children are safe and well looked after. Pupils participate in relevant school decision-making particularly through their participation in the Green Schools Committee and plans are in train to establish a student council. A positive code of behaviour, which supports learning is in place and pupil behaviour is generally good. The effective behaviour management approaches should now be embedded consistently through the school. A range of

policies is in place to support pupil well-being. The weekly school assembly is an effective forum for building a sense of community and reflects clearly the ethos and values that inform school life.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools* without modification and the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

4. Leadership and Management

- The members of the board of management carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively and they are very supportive of the principal and staff. Their obvious commitment to the establishment of the school has played a key role in its success to date. The board is compliant with statutory requirements and Department of Education and Skills regulations. Available finances have been used very judiciously to equip and refurbish the school building. Given the start-up nature of the school, an impressive range of policies and procedures has been discussed and ratified by the board, and the chairperson reports annually on the work of the board to the parents' association. Board members are understandably focused on securing the premises on a long-term basis for the benefit of the pupils and much time and energy have been and are given to this challenging and complex issue. It is advised, as new members are being elected onto the board in November 2015, that every effort would be made to ensure the widest possible representation on the board so that no one group is over represented.
- The principal inspires and enthuses his colleagues, children and wider school community. He places importance on building and nurturing relationships and on developing leadership among staff members. He is very committed to a vision that would see the school situated firmly in the local community. His dynamic, energetic and problem-solving approach has been particularly significant in bringing the school through a difficult and challenging start-up phase. He has cultivated a good team spirit among the staff and his range of skills is complemented by the skills of his colleagues. Staff members have contributed significantly to the establishment of the school on a number of levels and are reflective, open and interested in developing the school further. In order to manage the ongoing growth and expansion effectively, the principal should continue to build and foster the leadership capacity among them.
- The parents' association is very active and in this phase of the school's development, fundraising and refurbishing the school building have been the main priorities. The association has also successfully supported the integration of new families into the school, has established a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities and created a parents' room. Some useful practices are in place to support home-school links and according to the questionnaire returns, parents feel welcome in the school. In the context of a new school, it can be challenging to ensure that all members of the school community are aware of all the procedures, policies and practices that have been established over a short period of time. Every effort should be made to ensure that there is clarity for parents around the various policies and school procedures.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged meaningfully with the school self-evaluation process and a school improvement plan for literacy has been completed. A challenge for the school, as it expands rapidly, is to ensure that practices and approaches are developmental and consistent through the school. It is recommended that the staff use the SSE process to help them to slowly and effectively embed agreed approaches through the school.

Conclusion

The school has grown significantly since its establishment in 2013. The principal and staff members are very capable of expanding the school further and of providing high quality learning experiences for the pupils. To do this successfully they will have to plan carefully for

each new phase and ensure that good practices are consolidated and agreed whole-school approaches are clear to all.

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