

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

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

**REPORT**

**Scoil Lorcáin  
Eaton Square, Monkstown  
County Dublin  
Roll Number: 18451J**

**Date of inspection: 5 November 2015**



## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Lorcáin in November 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 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.

Scoil Lorcáin is a co-educational, all-Irish primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin, located in the south of the city. A new building is currently being built on the school site and it is intended that all classes will move to the new building during 2016.

There is a high demand for places in this all-Irish school serving pupils from a broad area. Most of the parents show a particular interest in Irish. There are currently 489 pupils enrolled in the school and they have a very good attendance record. It would be worthwhile for management to focus on the arrival times of a certain number of pupils in the morning and to develop appropriate strategies to improve arrival times and maintain them throughout the school year.

The evaluation has found:

- A high number of pupils are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy, according to the results of standardised tests. Pupils' achievements are particularly high in Irish.
- The teachers' teaching skills are of a good standard and of an excellent standard in some classes.
- The principal works capably and earnestly. Education through Irish is successfully and commendably fostered amongst staff and pupils.
- The teachers diligently and very effectively promote Irish as the primary language of communication in the school.
- The system of immersion implemented for language acquisition and to fully access the education provided in the school is highly successful.
- A broad curriculum is provided for the pupils and there are opportunities to expand the challenge to cater to various abilities.
- The board works effectively in partnership with the parents' committee to foster a spirit of community amongst all parties.
- The pupils are very diligent and have acquired excellent working habits.
- Two mainstream class teachers are working as support teachers in the junior classes on a full time basis.
- The in-school management staff functions professionally and diligently in the pupils' interest but there are opportunities to strengthen their roles regarding curriculum leadership.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended to the board that it ensures that teachers are allocated according to the schedule for staff provision and recruitment, as per Circular 0013/2013.
- To cater to the various abilities of the pupils, greater challenges should be provided in teaching and learning.
- The in-school management staff are doing valuable work, however it is recommended that regular meetings are held to strengthen their roles regarding curriculum leadership.

- It must be ensured that the in-class learning support has definite objectives.

## **Findings**

### **1. The learning achievements of pupils**

- The quality of pupils' learning and achievement is of a very good standard overall and of an excellent standard in Irish, in particular. Pupils show great interest in learning and have acquired excellent working habits.
- In the questionnaires distributed to pupils during the report, most of the pupils indicated that they enjoyed lessons and learning. Members of the parents' committee reported that they were very satisfied with the standard of education in the school.
- In Irish, most of the pupils make use of appropriate and rich vocabulary to describe identified themes and the junior pupils express themselves commendably during the Aistear programme. Commendable efforts are made to foster the habit of reading.
- Pupils can read well in both languages and can express themselves confidently. The pupils are proficient in the practice of writing in various genres in both languages, however there are opportunities to provide greater challenges for the various abilities by using a wider range of reading texts and developing writing skills.
- Learning is very good in Mathematics, overall. The standard in Mathematics has improved according to the results of standardised tests. Commendable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic and a numeric environment has been created throughout the school as part of the improvement plan in place in the school. The teachers are of the opinion that pupils have a more positive view of mathematics since certain activities have been promoted in this area. Active participation by pupils is very effectively fostered.
- Great work is done during school time every week by promoting traditional music sessions.
- Pupils in the senior classes can give an account of scientific tests and investigations completed by them and ably describe the local natural environment.
- Although space is a current challenge to implementing the Physical Education curriculum, pupils enthusiastically take part in the various lessons. Pupils satisfactorily perform athletics and activities.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, overall.

### **2. Quality of teaching**

- The quality of teaching is effective, with excellent practices in certain classes. Teaching in the school is based on the principle of immersion education. The teachers work diligently and take useful advantage of information and communication technology during teaching. Commendable emphasis is placed on using appropriate vocabulary relating to various subjects. A broad curriculum is provided to pupils and subjects are effectively integrated.
- Although the required differentiation for varying pupil abilities in learning is carried out to great effect in some classes, it would be worthwhile organising more challenging activities for high achieving pupils and for pupils of varying abilities. It is recommended that lessons be based on pupils' abilities and subjects of interest rather than on the content of various textbooks. It is recommended that active learning is developed during teaching and that a greater emphasis is placed on group learning.
- The standard of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is clear that a whole-school approach is in place for learning supports and that support teachers work well as a team. There is a good planning system for pupils with special needs that illustrates pupils' progression year on year. There should be a stronger link between pupils' primary learning needs and the recommendations in professional reports.
- Teachers have very good teaching skills and practise a wide range of support methods. Very good relations are maintained with parents of pupils with special

educational needs. It must be ensured that the in-class learning support has definite teaching objectives.

- Limited use is made of various assessment methods. Each teacher maintains an assessment folder on pupils' progress and the good practice commenced regarding pupils' self-assessment is commended. It is recommended that greater use be made of the results of the assessment to design differentiated activities that would provide students with richer learning experiences according to their abilities.

### **3. Support for pupils' well-being**

- Pupils are well managed. Teachers treat pupils in their care fairly and with respect and they create a happy learning environment for them. Pupils display a great interest in learning and the results of the questionnaires indicate that they like school. It is recommended that pupils' opinions be welcomed more often by developing a system of communication and cultivating clarity regarding their learning expectations.
- Regular contact is maintained with parents and reports on pupils' progress are sent to them annually. In the questionnaires distributed during the evaluation, most parents felt that the school is well run and they feel welcome in the school.
- Confirmation was provided by school authorities 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 functions effectively and members are very active in the management of the school. The board is highly dedicated to the school ethos and to the preservation of the language. The board works in partnership with the parents' committee and has good contact with the local community and with staff to support the work of the school and to strengthen the spirit of community among all school partners.
- There are currently two mainstream class teachers working as support teachers in the junior classes on a full-time basis. It is recommended to the board that it ensures that teachers are allocated according to the schedule for staff provision and recruitment, as per Circular 0013/2013.
- Although the board, parents committee and parents of the school in general are afforded the opportunity to present their opinions on the school's organisational policies, the results of the questionnaires completed by parents indicate that there is a need to seek their opinions on school affairs frequently.
- The principal carries out his organisational and managerial duties ably and diligently. Education through Irish is successfully and commendably fostered amongst staff and pupils. Appropriate duties are assigned to in-school management staff, according to agreed priorities and they do valuable work. It is recommended that the in-school management staff hold regular meetings to implement structure and their roles regarding curriculum leadership.

### **5. School Self-evaluation**

- Improvement targets are laid out in the school improvement plan and highly beneficial activities are being implemented as part of the improvement plan for literacy and numeracy. The school self-evaluation process would be a very suitable tool for the staff to promote learning priorities for pupils according to their abilities.

## **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to **develop** further / **engage in school improvement** is good.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management and staff of Scoil Lorcáin welcomes this report. We are very satisfied with the praise given to the various aspects of the work and the life of the school. We are happy that the positive role of the staff, board and parents is affirmed. We are very pleased as well that the pupils' dedication is recognised in the report. We commend the report on behalf of the pupils, staff and school community.

## **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

We fully accept the main recommendations. We are already working on implementing the recommendations.

The teachers will be allocated according to the schedule Circular 13/2013 when the current development work is completed at the school; by March 2016, at the latest.

Greater challenges are provided in the teaching and learning.

In-school management meetings will be organised from now on, commencing in January 2016.

Specific objectives for in-class learning support will be ensured.

We will examine how best to use assessment results.

To encourage the improvement of the arrival times, there is a campaign of surveys and communication with pupils and parents.

***This is a translation of the School Response provided by the Board of Management.***