

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Ennis Educate Together National School
Ennis, Co Clare
Uimhir rolla: 20086B**

Date of inspection: 11 February 2016



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Ennis Educate Together National School in February 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 administrative principal, the single school manager, the in-school management team, the special educational needs (SEN) team, a parent representative, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. The manager of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the manager will be found in the appendix of this report.

Since December 2011, the patron body, Educate Together, has determined that the appointment of a board of management has not been practicable and a single manager has been in place. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. As part of this, the School Completion Programme operates in the school. There are ninety-three pupils on roll, down from an enrolment of 190 at the time of the last whole-school evaluation in 2009. The impact of the school's attendance strategy requires review as there is a significant cohort of pupils for whom attendance levels and punctuality remain poor.

The evaluation has found:

- The management of the school, as provided for by the patron body, is ineffective and thus unsatisfactory.
- Teachers in both mainstream and special education support settings work diligently and in a concerted manner to provide for pupils' needs and they demonstrate a very strong commitment to school improvement.
- A significant strength in the school is the very effective and highly valuable contribution made by the deputy principal and the members of the middle management team to school leadership, policy review and change management.
- The school faces significant challenges in the diversity of pupils' social skills, language and learning needs. The overall learning achievements of pupils are fair and there is scope for development in the overall quality of teaching which ranges from fair to very good.
- Pupils would derive greater benefit from a more cohesive in-class support model and from more focused use of the school's full allocation of teachers for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs.
- A range of supports for pupils' well-being has been put in place. Some significant efforts have been made, in keeping with the school's stated ethos, to foster parental inclusion in the life of the school.
- The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* have not been formally adopted by the school and the school is not compliant with all essential child protection requirements.
- The functions of the principal are being carried out to an unsatisfactory standard both in the areas of instructional leadership and school administration.
- The school has begun to engage effectively with the process of self-evaluation (SSE) and specific areas for improvement have been identified.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In accordance with Section 14 of the Education Act 1998 the patron body should ensure that it provides for the effective management of the school as a matter of priority. In particular, it should appoint a board of management upon which parents, teachers and the wider school community have nominees.

- As a matter of urgency, school management needs to take the steps necessary to ensure full compliance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.
- The principal should provide effective instructional leadership in the school's core functions of teaching, learning and pupil achievement and he should take all necessary steps to execute his full administrative role in an effective manner.
- Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy should be significantly improved through the provision of more specific, focused instruction in both mainstream and support settings.
- Teaching in mainstream classes should be further differentiated, modified and intensified to take account of each child's needs. Specific emphasis should be placed on discrete oral language development in the infant and junior classes and on the development of pupils' cognitive and academic language proficiency in middle and senior classes.
- Provision for learning support and resource teaching should be restructured to ensure less fragmented delivery and staff should be more appropriately deployed in a manner that ensures maximum benefit for pupils. Greater use should be made of in-class support and collaborative team-teaching and there should be more focused use of the school's full allocation of EAL teachers.
- A policy on staff rotation should be developed to ensure a full range of professional experience is provided for teachers across mainstream and support settings.
- A parents' association should be re-established to help support cultural diversity and to strengthen consultation and collaboration between home and school.
- The impact of the school's attendance and behaviour management strategies should be reviewed, in consultation with the staff and parent body, to ensure a shared understanding of the responsibilities of both home and school in relation to curriculum access, attendance and pupil behaviour.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are fair. In response to the diverse range of pupil abilities, the teachers have initiated a wide range of interventions aimed at improving learning outcomes. Some detailed analysis of pupil attainment has been undertaken within the school's literacy programme and there is evidence of some improvement for some cohorts of pupils. This progress provides a very good base for the continued development of pupil learning. However, there is evidence that pupils are generally achieving below national norms in literacy and numeracy and there remains a need to significantly improve learning outcomes in both areas. Higher expectations and clearer targets should be set in respect of learning outcomes for specific target pupils.
- The current timetabling of various interventions to promote pupils' learning results in fragmented provision. Learning needs could be better met through greater use of team-teaching and collaborative in-class support.
- Play-based, integrated learning in the infant classes is very well resourced and collaboratively planned through the implementation of aspects of the *Aistear* framework. It is recommended that the impact of this intervention be closely monitored in light of the significant challenge faced by the school in catering for the diversity of pupils' social skills and language needs.

2. Quality of teaching

- There is scope for development in the overall quality of teaching which ranges from fair to very good. Where teaching was most effective, it was characterised by well-developed questioning skills, active methodologies, opportunities for independent learning, and very effective use of resources to support and enhance lesson delivery. A whole-school approach to individual teacher planning would assist in disseminating this very good practice. Given the significant language needs of the majority of pupils,

there should be a much stronger emphasis on discrete oral language development in the junior classes. In addition, teaching in middle and senior classes should prioritise the development of pupils' cognitive and academic language proficiency.

- Teachers in both mainstream and special education support settings demonstrate a very strong commitment to school improvement and they work in a concerted way to provide for pupils' needs. Their engagement in relevant professional development is praiseworthy and a strong skill-set is available.
- Provision for learning support and resource teaching requires review. The model should be restructured to ensure less fragmented delivery. The principal, in allocating teaching duties, should ensure teachers are deployed in a manner that ensures maximum benefit for pupils. This should include the implementation of appropriate strategies to support pupils with EAL needs. A policy on staff rotation should be developed to provide a full range of professional experience for teachers across mainstream and support settings.
- The school engages in frequent summative assessment of learning and a wide range of appropriate tools is used to identify pupils for support. However, more frequent formative assessment is required to guide teaching and to ensure teaching is further differentiated, modified and intensified to take account of each child's needs.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The school benefits from the work of a home-school-community liaison co-ordinator (HSCL) and a range of supports for pupils' well-being has been put in place. In general, pupils are well managed. Responses to questionnaires indicate that most pupils like school and feel safe in their class. The school has begun to implement the Incredible Years Programme (IY) designed to promote children's pro-social behaviour. Many of the staff have recently completed training in IY as part of the school's classroom-based prevention and early-intervention programme. It is anticipated that IY will impact positively on behaviour management when fully implemented.
- A revised code of behaviour has recently been disseminated to all teachers for application in all settings. This is very good practice. The effectiveness of the implementation of behaviour management strategies should be reviewed in consultation with the parent body to ensure a shared understanding of the responsibilities of both home and school in relation to curriculum access and behaviour management.
- Some significant efforts have been made, in keeping with the school's stated ethos, to foster parental inclusion in the life of the school. Evidence from parents' responses to questionnaires suggests that there is scope for development in how the school informs parents about policies such as anti-bullying and RSE, how management reports to parents on the work of the school and how frequently the school seeks the views of parents. The draft parental involvement policy requires review to reflect the context of the school community more closely. It is important that the parents' association be re-established to help support cultural diversity and to strengthen consultation and collaboration between home and school.
- Some draft policies have been prepared by the in-school management team in key areas including child protection, SPHE and RSE, and the valuable work of those involved is highly commendable. However, the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* have not been formally adopted and the school is not compliant with child protection requirements in a number of respects, some of which reflect absence of an effective management structure and some which fall within the principal's remit. It is recommended that immediate steps be taken to address compliance in this area. In particular, the principal should ensure the requirements for Garda vetting under Circular 63/2010 are fully met and the Stay Safe Programme should be fully implemented across the school.

4. Leadership and Management

- The provision for school management, as put in place by the patron body, is ineffective and thus unsatisfactory. During the evaluation no evidence could be found

since December 2011 of progress being made towards the provision of an effective overall management structure for the school. Records available do not indicate effective communication between the single manager and the principal, and minutes are not recorded for any meetings that may have been convened. Furthermore, parents, teachers and the wider school community have not been enabled to nominate members to a board of management.

- Effective management is required in key areas including, but not limited to, child protection compliance, the nomination of parents, teachers and wider school community members to a board of management, the development and ratification of policy documents and the School Plan, the use of data to monitor and track pupil attainment, SSE and school improvement planning. It is essential that the patron body put in place management structures that will ensure that such requirements are met to the required standard and that it maintains an active interest in satisfying itself that the standards continue to be met.
- The in-school management team includes the principal, deputy principal and five special-duties post holders. The execution of the functions of the principal is unsatisfactory both in the areas of instructional leadership and school administration. There is evidence that staff morale is low and communication between principal and staff requires significant improvement. The principal needs to take positive steps to lead and support staff and to set high expectations for pupils. The principal's instructional leadership role should have a key focus on prioritising the core functions of the school - learning, teaching, assessment and improved pupil attainment. A clear guiding vision for the school's sustained development and future viability should be established by the principal and communicated to the school community.
- The deputy principal and the special-duties post holders provide significant support to the principal. These middle management members have assumed individual and collective responsibility for many extra aspects of leadership and in-school management in addition to their assigned duties. Their commitment and diligence in this regard is highly praiseworthy. To restore balance in the duties undertaken by many of the team, responsibility for some aspects of school administration and curriculum leadership should revert to the administrative principal.

5. School Self-evaluation

The teachers have begun to engage effectively with the process of SSE. Specific areas for improvement have been identified and school improvement plans (SIPs) have been developed. This good work would be enhanced through the more active leadership of the principal, more clearly stated improvement targets and rigorous analysis of the impact of actions indicated in the SIPs.

Conclusion

The school's future viability and its capacity to develop further are critically dependent upon the quality of school management as provided for by the patron body and the quality of informed leadership provided by the principal. All available supports should be accessed to enable management and staff work collaboratively for the benefit of all pupils. The commitment and dedication demonstrated by classroom and support teachers will serve the school very well into the future.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Manager of the School

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school acknowledges the findings of the Whole School Evaluation. We note the recommendations for future development and the school is committed to putting a plan in place to address these.

Ennis Educate Together NS particularly welcomes a number of aspects of the report including:

- Pupils like school, feel safe in their classes and are well supported in their wellbeing;
- Pupils are well managed by staff;
- Teachers are committed to improving the school;
- Significant efforts are made to foster parental inclusion;
- Teachers have initiated a wide range of interventions aimed at improving learning outcomes
- Teachers are actively engaged in completing CPD and a strong skillset is available and
- Teachers are committed and dedicated and will serve the school very well into the future.

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

The school, with the patron, is committed to establishing a board of management before the end of the school term. When established the board of management will put in place an action plan to oversee the implementation of the recommendations that relate to operational and educational matters within the school. This will ensure that action is taken in a timely manner. The principal is committed to ensuring that the recommendations are addressed. The action plan will include all findings in the report and priority will be put on addressing the main points.

The Child Protection policy has been ratified and implemented in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Training has been requested as a priority from the PDST and will be scheduled with staff. The new Garda vetting guidelines are being followed.

A Parent Teacher Association has been formed in the school and will be affiliated to the National Parents Council.

In the school Small Group Literacy Intervention with the senior classes has commenced. An in-class model of support is now in use in infant and senior classes.

Standardized templates for planning and Cúntais Míosúla will be used from September 2016. The principal is developing a staff rotation policy. Approaches to teaching are currently being reviewed by staff to further support those pupils with low attainment in both numeracy and literacy.

The school staff intends to place stronger emphasis on discrete oral language lessons. Teachers will work on improving cognitive and academic language proficiency for third to sixth class.

This year the PDST has worked with teachers in developing a wider range of comprehension strategies for all classes.

EAL teachers are teaching English as an additional language to English language learners in all classes. There is in class support in the Infant room supporting numeracy. The staff is committed to using a broader range of Assessment for Learning strategies.

In conjunction with the School Completion Programme, staff and the principal are working closely with the Education Welfare Officer to improve and monitor attendance levels and punctuality in the school.