An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Cashel National School
Gleann Cholm Cille, County Donegal
Roll Number: 18652T

Date of Inspection: 21 January 2015

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

INSPECTORATE

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE – MLL) was carried out in Cashel National School in January 2015. This report is based upon a selection of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and a review of their work, meetings with the principal, with the chair of the board and parent representatives, pupil and parent questionnaires and a selection of school documents. The board of management 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.

This is co-educational Gaeltacht school with an enrolment of 69 pupils. The school participates in a Schools Support Programme under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme (DEIS). It also participates in the Language Assistants' Programme which is funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Although the school is located in the Gaeltacht, a high number of pupils attending come from backgrounds in which Irish is not the main language of the home. The staff make highly praiseworthy efforts to address the sociolinguistic needs and demands that arise from such language backgrounds in Gaeltacht areas.

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

- The school is working effectively in providing a high-quality education for the pupils.
- The management board work well in co-operation with school staff to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils.
- A culture of co-operation and hard work is apparent among the school staff.
- The pupils have been inculcated with excellent work habits.
- Teaching and learning standards and student achievement are very high.
- The principal fulfils his leadership duties regarding curriculum and organisation in a highly professional and very effective manner.
- The staff are implementing positive measures as part of the school improvement plan.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that plans be made for teaching approaches to integrate information and communications technology in teaching and learning.
- It is recommended that the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme be implemented in full.

Results

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The quality of learning and achievement is, on the whole, of a high standard. The pupils have been inculcated with excellent working habits and evidence of their progress is to be found in their copy books, projects, folders and in their clear answers to questions.

- The school has reached an excellent standard as regards the learning of Irish. Most of the pupils are fluent in Irish, particularly in the middle and senior classes. Most have a very high standard of comprehension and receive rich linguistic input in the form of poetry, stories and conversation. The progress made by pupils in the junior classes in acquiring and using Irish is deserving of praise. The standard of reading and writing in Irish and English is very good. In Mathematics, learning is very good on the whole. It is clear from school-based assessment and from work done during the

evaluation that a high number of pupils are working to a high level of learning in various curriculum subjects.

- The pupils' progress has been very good, including those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils play a very active role in learning and perform their tasks with notable ability.

2. Quality of teaching

- Teaching quality is, on the whole, very effective. Three teachers take the mainstream classes, which are multi-graded. In addition to that, a learning-support teacher is in the school for three and a half days per week and a resource teacher is present for six and a half hours per week. At the time of this report, a substitute was working as a resource teacher. A language assistant provides support to pupils for eight hours per week, concentrating on linguistic enrichment.

- There is a culture of co-operation, mutual support and hard work among all school staff in the planning and implementation of work. Effective provision is made for differences in proficiency among the pupils. Classroom teaching is structured and the lessons appropriately paced. Although use is made of an interactive white board during teaching, it is recommended to staff that they plan for teaching methods that integrate information and communications technology in teaching and learning.

- The co-operative teaching strategies employed in every classroom are very successful and a system of shared teaching for certain lessons is being implemented.

- A system of assessment is in place which closely measures pupils' progress and which has a positive impact on teaching and learning.

- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very effective. Positive strategies for early intervention are in place and the pupils' reading and numeracy skills are developed gradually.

3. Support for pupils' wellbeing

- Pupil management is, on the whole, very effective, and good behaviour is cultivated through use of an appropriate system of behaviour management. The staff maintain a positive relationship with pupils which includes the use of praise and positive feedback. In the questionnaires distributed among the pupils, a majority agreed that they were doing well in reading and in Mathematics. A high number indicated that they didn't use computers during lessons.

- The school does beneficial work in attending to the various needs of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school participates in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, for example drama, quizzes, football and concerts. The parents give much support to these activities. School assemblies take place on a regular basis.

- Pupil profiles and appropriate individual plans are provided for pupils with special educational needs. All students, including those with special educational needs, are included in work within the classroom and in other learning settings in a highly effective manner. A part-time special needs assistant provides assistance to pupils with particular needs.

- In the questionnaires distributed during the evaluation, a majority of parents agreed that they are welcome in the school, that they are satisfied with school and that their children are doing well. A high number agreed that they were not informed about policy regarding Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It is recommended that the RSE programme be implemented in its entirety. At the post-evaluation meeting, the school staff indicated that the policy would be sent to each parent without delay and that planning was underway for the full implementation of the RSE programme.

- 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 board of management works well and its members are active in the management of the school. The board works in an effective manner in co-operation with the school staff to provide pupils with a wide and balanced curriculum. Members understand the importance of native culture and language in this Gaeltacht area and ensure that priority is given to Irish at all times.

- The teaching principal fulfils his leadership roles as regards curriculum and organisation in a highly professional and very effective manner. His approach is to seek a high standard from pupils and from all staff. The deputy principal duties are implemented well to ensure the needs of the school are met.

- In the questionnaires distributed during the evaluation, the majority of parents agreed the opinion that the school was well run.

5. School Self-evaluation

- A three-year DEIS plan has been prepared and particular targets achieved with much success. The school emphasised the graduated development of literacy and numeracy from class to class as part of the DEIS plan.

- Very good work is being done in relation to school self-evaluation. Through a review process, the school undertakes valuable evaluation and reporting of pupils' learning, the quality of the pupils' learning experience and the quality of teaching. Improvement targets have been laid out and positive measures are being taken as part of the improvement plan in Irish and in Mathematics. The board has shared the report with the school community, as is appropriate.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is good in light of the collaborative culture among all staff members.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school staff and board of management are very pleased with the findings and recommendations in this school report.

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 staff and board of management are working hard currently to implement the (RSE) programme in its entirety in the school. The programme will commence in the third term this year.
We, as a school staff, are currently reviewing all teaching approaches so as to increase pupils' use of information and communication technologies in the school.

{The above text is a translation of the school response to the report submitted by the Board of Management.}