An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Fairgreen National School
Belturbet, County Cavan
Uimhir rolla: 13271F

Date of inspection: 4 March 2014

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in Fairgreen National School in March, 2014. 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 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.

Fairgreen National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Kilmore. The current enrolment of forty-nine pupils is accommodated equitably across two classrooms; infants and first class in one room and second to sixth classes in the other. A significant cohort of pupils for whom English is an additional language attend the school. School attendance is good overall.

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

- The board of management works in a diligent and effective manner providing very good support to the school.
- The principal and staff work collaboratively and very successfully; they have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement.
- The day-to-day operation of the school is very smooth and efficient.
- The overall quality of teaching in both the mainstream and support setting is commendable with some excellent individual practices observed.
- The pupils' overall attainment in numeracy is very good and their literacy attainment shows continuous improvement.
- Lessons observed in Music and History had very good learning outcomes.
- Stimulating, well-organised learning environments have been created and there are plentiful resources for teaching and learning.
- There is regular and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Improved learning outcomes are necessary in Irish; a more structured approach to curriculum implementation and assessment would assist this.
- There is need to review a number of school policies; advice from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) should inform this process.
- School management should ensure that pupils are placed in the age-appropriate class upon enrolment and that there is appropriate record-keeping in respect of any exemptions from the study of Irish.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are good. Most pupils demonstrated high levels of engagement and co-operation in the observed lessons.

- Overall learning outcomes in numeracy are very good, as is also evidenced in standardised test scores. Learning outcomes in literacy are satisfactory and improving on a continuous basis. Junior pupils' emergent literacy development is

successful. In the middle and senior classes, there is high-quality provision for reading and writing; most pupils write confidently and the presentation of work is commendable.

- Tá scóip chun forbartha i dtorthaí foghlama na ndaltaí i nGaeilge. Moltar cur chuige uile-scoile níos córasaí a chur i bhfeidhm chun an fhoghlaim a fheabhsú. Moltar measúnú leanúnach sa bhreis a dhéanamh trasna na ceithre snáithe agus scrúduithe caighdeánaithe a eagrú i nGaeilge chomh maith. (*In Irish, there is scope for development in respect of the pupils' overall learning outcomes. A more systematic whole-school approach is necessary in order to improve learning. Further continuous assessment is recommended across all four strands as well as the introduction of standardised tests for Irish)*.

- Most pupils are making very good progress in Mathematics and observed lessons were suitably challenging. The pupils' engagement in History is very good and they are knowledgeable about work undertaken. Provision for Music is very good overall; pupils sing regularly and, during the evaluation, played ukulele and percussion. Songs in the Irish language should be included in the pupils' repertoire. There is very regular and effective use of ICT to support learning in literacy and numeracy.

- Pupils in receipt of additional support for literacy and numeracy are making good progress supported by withdrawal interventions.

- In questionnaires, distributed as part of the evaluation, most pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning and are making good progress in reading and Mathematics. There was greater variation in the pupils' responses in respect of participation in group work; throughout the school, more use of collaborative learning approaches is recommended.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- The overall quality of teaching is commendable with some excellent individual practices observed. Class teachers manifest very good enthusiasm for teaching and a very strong work ethic. They have created stimulating, well-ordered learning environments.

- Baineann na hoidí úsáid fhánach as an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil le linn an lae; ba chóir go méadófaí an úsáid sin. (*Teachers make occasional use of incidental Irish during the day; this should be increased*). Provision should be made for teaching of Drama in line with the curriculum's suggested minimum weekly time framework (*Primary School Curriculum: Introduction*, page 70).

- Teachers provide regular classroom planning. Going forward, a review of long-term planning approaches should be undertaken and monthly progress reports should be maintained centrally.

- Whole-school assessment of literacy and numeracy is careful and thorough. Commendably, some *assessment for learning* activities have been introduced in both the mainstream and support settings.

- Currently, two support teachers—one for learning support and one for pupils with special educational needs—visit the school. The quality of teaching observed was commendable and teacher-pupil rapport was very good. Planning and recording of progress are good overall. However, a more comprehensive end-of-term review process is recommended.

- Responses to parental questionnaires, distributed as part of the evaluation process, indicate a very positive regard for the school. Almost all parents indicated that

teaching is good and that their child is making good progress. A few parents indicated dissatisfaction in respect of the amount of homework their child gets.

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

- During the evaluation, the management of pupils was very effective and they presented as very well behaved and respectful. Teachers showed great commitment to their pupils. The work of the special needs assistant is very beneficial to the care and well-being of pupils.

- In their questionnaires responses, almost all parents agreed that their children felt safe in school, were well looked after and that discipline was good. Most parents were satisfied with anti-bullying procedures.

- The school benefits significantly from its ongoing involvement in a cross-border, cross-community programme. A wide range of artistic, creative and social co-curricular activities is undertaken. Pupils participate in various competitions and have won several awards. Assemblies and prize-giving ceremonies are conducted regularly. A very inclusive school magazine is produced.

- Financial contributions from parents towards tuition for co-curricular activities in Music during school time should be discontinued.

- 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 in a diligent and effective manner providing very good support to the school. It should now consider disseminating further information about its good work by providing an annual report to parents.

- The principal leads the school in a capable and efficient manner; she has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. There is evidence of very successful staff collaboration. The assistant teacher provides very good support to the principal. Day-to-day operation of the school is very smooth and efficient. Ancillary staff contributes very beneficially to the day-to-day operation of the school.

- School management is advised to review its class placement policy. It should ensure that, upon enrolment, new pupils are placed in the age-appropriate class.

- The school has granted exemptions from studying Irish to a number of pupils. In examining the relevant documentation, it was found that the exemption files were not complete in some cases. This should be addressed without delay so as to ensure adherence to the parameters of circular 12/96 titled *Revision of Circular 18/79 on Exemption from the study of Irish.*

- The management of relationships with the school community is very good. In questionnaires, most parents agreed that the school is well-run and welcoming. Plans are underway to establish a parents' association.

5. **School Self-evaluation**

- A wide range of administrative and curriculum planning exists. However, there is need now to plan a cycle of continuous review; advice from the Professional

Development Service for Teachers (PDST) should inform this process. There are opportunities to involve parents in the review process.

- To begin with, the code of behaviour and policies for anti-bullying, critical incidents, learning support, special educational needs and substance misuse should be reviewed. An intercultural policy should be drafted. The plan for Irish should provide greater support to teachers in improving whole-school learning outcomes across all four curriculum strands. The policy for relationships and sexuality education should inform teaching from the infant level onwards and should be re-issued to parents.

- The school has identified reading as a priority area for self-evaluation and has begun to implement a number of initiatives to improve overall reading standards. At the time of the evaluation, the production of a self-evaluation report was a work in progress.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good, given the dedication and professionalism of the teaching staff and the support of the board of management.

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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 B.O.M. of the Fairgreen N.S. welcomes the recent WSE- MLL report and its acknowledgement of the high standards and quality of teaching and learning in our school. We are pleased that the main strengths of the school were identified and that the commitment and dedication of all members of the school community was affirmed.

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 Principal and staff have taken on board all aspects of the recommendations. Their implementation has been prioritised as part of the school's Development Plan.