An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Knockanillo National School
Ballina, County Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 16562I

Date of inspection: 24 November 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 undertaken in Knockanillo National School 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.

Knockanillo National School is a small, co-educational, well-presented school located in a rural setting approximately two miles from Ballina, County Mayo, with forty-three pupils from both rural and urban backgrounds. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. Enrolment remains steady. Two mainstream class teachers are supported by a shared resource teacher and a shared learning-support teacher. A part-time secretary and a part-time caretaker contribute to the effective running of the school. The school will celebrate its centenary in 2018.

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

- A welcoming, supportive school environment is promoted successfully.
- An interested and committed board of management is very supportive of school staff and pupils.
- The staff works very hard and very diligently and is led by a principal who works in a very dedicated and enthusiastic manner.
- The management of relationships within the school community is very good and parents are very supportive of their children's involvement in a range of in-school and extra-curricular activities.
- The overall standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good.
- The pupils are very friendly, confident and enthusiastic learners.
- Very high levels of pupil engagement and participation were observed. Pupil efforts and achievements are affirmed.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is of a high quality. It is opportune now to consider a whole-school approach and policy for handwriting and the writing process.
- Structured, differentiated programmes for literacy and numeracy are implemented in all classes in line with school self-evaluation (SSE) targets and to accommodate pupils of different abilities.
- Assessment is integral to the teaching and learning process. To further enhance this work, the staff should consider adopting a whole-school approach to assessment for learning (AfL).

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school community should consider the introduction of a school website.
- Ar mhaithe le cumas agus muinín na ndaltaí sa teanga a fhorbairt, moltar a thuilleadh béime a chur ar fhíorchumarsáid sa Ghaeilge. *In order to develop pupil competence and confidence in the language, it is advised that extra emphasis be placed on real communication in Irish.*

Findings

1. **The learning achievements of pupils**

- Overall learning achievements of pupils are very good. Participation in pupil-centred methodologies and collaborative, active and skills-based approaches maximise pupil engagement, interest and cooperation. Pupils are able to answer questions effectively and comprehensively across a range of curriculum areas indicating mastery of specific concepts and skills.

- In the questionnaires administered during the evaluation, all pupils agreed that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Pupils are clearly benefitting from the commendable whole-school focus that has been placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

- Learning outcomes in literacy are very good. Pupils express themselves very confidently and effectively. Their comprehension skills are very well developed. Emergent literacy skills are structured effectively. All classes recite a variety of poems with enthusiasm. An emphasis on a variety of differentiated reading approaches and programmes, including use of novels, big books and library books is implemented across the school; this enhances individual pupil outcomes. The quality of pupils' written work in both Irish and English is good although there is scope to develop a systematic approach and policy to writing and the writing process across the school. Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work are of a high quality. Enabling the pupils to review, report and record activities and topics covered in all areas of the curriculum will further enable their competences across all genres.

- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá formhór na ndaltaí ábalta abairtí simplí a chumadh agus cruthaíonn na múinteoirí deiseanna cainte cuí dóibh. Tugtar a thuilleadh seans do na daltaí sinsireacha an teanga a phlé trí drámaíocht agus scéalaíocht. Moltar a thuilleadh béime a chur ar fhíorchumarsáid sa Ghaeilge. Chun cur leis an obair agus chun líofacht agus féinmhuinín na ndaltaí a chothú, b'fhiú an Ghaeilge, an drámaíocht agus an agallaimh a nascadh a thuilleadh. Moltar measúnú caighdeánach a úsáid don Ghaeilge.
  The quality of learning in Irish is good. Most pupils are able to construct simple sentences and teachers create appropriate speaking opportunities for them. Extra opportunities are afforded senior pupils to explore the language through drama and story. It is advised that extra emphasis be placed on real communication in Irish. To add to the effectiveness of the work and to foster pupil fluency and self-confidence, Irish, drama and debate should be more closely inter-linked. The use of a standardised test in Irish could be considered.

- The school has significant strengths in Mathematics and the quality of learning outcomes is very good. The pupils engage in their learning tasks with interest and enthusiasm. They use mathematical language, manipulatives and games appropriately. They demonstrate good competence in number facts. A whole-school approach to differentiation of the mathematics curriculum and opportunities for pupils to participate in mixed ability problem-solving groups benefit their experience and attainment.

- The school has undertaken successfully a biodiversity project as part of their fifth assignment in the *Green Schools Programme.* A range of worthwhile and interesting learning experiences and skills-based approaches is provided for pupils in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) and very good use is made of the school and local environments. A broad programme of work is provided in Arts Education.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is very good. Attractive learning environments have been created. Expected learning outcomes are clearly and relevantly outlined in plans. The work is differentiated to cater for the variety of

learning needs. Lessons are very well structured and well paced and are characterised by clear communication and effective classroom management. Some very good use of information and communication technology was observed. Teachers display a very strong work ethic.

- The teachers' use of a variety of teaching approaches, including station teaching, pair and small group work and cooperative strategies, is highly commended.

- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. A team approach is adopted and a wide variety of approaches is used to very good effect including staged, early intervention and differentiated in-class work. Individual pupils and small groups are supported through both withdrawal and in-class arrangements. Appropriate individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning programmes (IPLPs) are drawn up.

- In their responses to the questionnaires issued as part of the evaluation all parents agreed that teaching is good in the school and that their children are doing well.

- The school's implementation of assessment procedures is praiseworthy and assessment is integral to the teaching and learning cycle. An effective tracking system of individual pupils is in place. The use of standardised and criterion-referenced tests is embedded in practice. The suitable implementation of pupil self-assessment is also in evidence. Teachers are encouraged to formally adopt the use of AfL approaches in the school's policy and practice in order to extend the monitoring of the effectiveness of various programmes and pupil progress.

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

- Support for pupils' well-being is very good overall. Pupils are managed kindly and sensitively. A positive and inherent respect is evident between pupils and their teachers. The pupils present as friendly, courteous, confident and supportive of one another. There is a strong emphasis on the holistic development of all pupils. A diverse range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is organised for their benefit. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their potential across the curriculum.

- Very positive home-school relationships and communication systems with the parish and the local community are evident. The recently revived parents' association is very willing and enthusiastic to assist and support the work of the school. The school community should consider the introduction of a school website to further enhance these provisions.

- A book rental scheme is in operation.

- 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**

- Leadership and management are very good overall. The board of management is properly constituted, is very participant in the life of the school and very supportive of its work. The chairperson is a very frequent visitor to the school. School accounts are audited. The board engages in the cyclical ratification and review of policies and in the SSE process.

- The principal has created a very positive and collaborative school environment. She provides effective leadership and works in a collegial manner with the special duties teacher and other staff members who carry out their assigned duties in a very competent manner.

5. **School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of SSE is very good and effective systems and processes are undertaken. Teachers engage in professional and collegial discussion and share effective pedagogical practice. They are encouraged to continue to carefully monitor and review targets and actions.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good especially given the commitment of the teachers and the school community to the development of the school.

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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 of Knockanillo N.S. appreciates the professional and courteous manner in which the inspector conducted the evaluation.
The Board welcomes the positive comments on the very high standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the school.
The Board is extremely pleased that the inspector acknowledged and affirmed the dedication and diligence of the staff as well as the support and commitment of the Board of Management.

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 Board of Management acknowledges the recommendations made in the report. The implementation of these recommendations has been prioritised as part of the School Development Plan and School Self Evaluation Process.