An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Mhuire
Cnoc Mhuire, Muineachán
Co. Mhuineacháin
Roll number: 17150N

Date of inspection: 20 April 2016

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Mhuire, Muineachán in April 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 principal and with board and parent representatives, completed teacher, 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.

Scoil Mhuire is a senior primary school catering for boys from second to sixth class. There are also two classes, of mixed gender, for pupils with specific speech and language disorders (SSLD). The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clogher. Currently, there are 284 pupils enrolled. Attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The quality of pupils' learning achievements is very good. Further development of oral language competencies would enhance learning.
- The quality of teaching, in both mainstream and support settings, is very good.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is commendable. Review of the provision should ensure that resources have maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- Highly effective leadership and management are evident in the school.
- Pastoral care provision is of a very high standard.
- The school self-evaluation (SSE) process is of a high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A whole-school oral language programme should be devised and implemented to ensure the systematic development of pupils' overall communicative skills.

- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs should be reviewed to facilitate purposeful in-class interventions and to co-ordinate the learning experiences for pupils.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The learning achievements of pupils are very good. They engage enthusiastically in a broad range of educational experiences which are tailored to their needs and interests. They have very positive attitudes to learning and displayed commendable knowledge in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education during the evaluation. Their handwriting and work presentation are praiseworthy.

- The quality of pupils' learning in English is good. Reading skills are suitably developed and pupils are motivated to read. A wider range of approaches to reading would further enhance their experiences. In most instances, the writing process is well developed over a wide range of genres with appropriate emphasis placed on drafting and presenting published work. Commendably, pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool to research and present work. They recite poetry very competently. While some pupils speak with

confidence, there is need to devise a whole-school oral language programme to ensure the systematic development of pupils' overall communicative skills.

- Tá cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith. Is inmholta mar a úsáidtear an Ghaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil go rialta sa scoil. Tá sé ar chumas na ndaltaí abairtí a chumadh agus a úsáid i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla le muinín agus le cruinneas. Léann siad le líofacht agus le tuiscint. Tá gá, áfach, a scileanna fóineolaíochta a fhorbairt a thuilleadh.
  The quality of learning in Irish is very good. It is praiseworthy that Irish is used incidentally on a regular basis in the school. Pupils are capable of constructing sentences and using them in various contexts with confidence and with accuracy. Pupils read with fluency and understanding. There is need, however, to develop their phonological skills further.

- The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good. Strong emphasis is placed on connecting mathematics to the life experiences of the pupils. Concepts are explained clearly and pupils are provided with various opportunities to engage in talk and discussion. To further enhance pupils' numeracy skills, greater emphasis should be placed on the use of open-ended problem-solving to support challenging work for all pupils.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- Teaching in the school is of a very high quality. Stimulating environments and attractive displays of pupils' work support and celebrate learning. Lessons were well paced with teachers employing a wide range of active approaches. In some instances, greater use of pair work is advised. Teachers' short-term planning should be more explicit in terms of learning objectives, differentiation and assessment practices.

- Is inmholta mar a fhaigheann na daltaí deiseanna chun scríobh i seanraí eagsúla sa Ghaeilge, i gcuid de na ranganna. B'fhiú an dea-chleachtas seo a leathnú ar fud na scoile. Moltar scrúduithe caighdeánaithe a úsáid chun dul chun cinn na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a mheas.
  The opportunities afforded pupils to write in various genres in Irish, in some classes, are praiseworthy. This good practice should be emulated across the school. Standardised assessments should be conducted to monitor pupil progress in Irish.

- The school adopts a collaborative approach to provision for pupils with additional learning needs and for those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Well-structured lessons and initiatives such as *Reading Recovery* are commendable features of provision. While the staged approach is applied, stage one should be documented. Support is delivered through a blend of withdrawal and in-class approaches. However, provision should be reviewed to facilitate purposeful in-class interventions and to co-ordinate the learning experiences for pupils. While education plans are in place for all pupils, a whole-school approach to the formulation of individual education plans (IEPs) and short-term planning should be adopted.

- The SSLD classes provide positive learning experiences for pupils with specific speech and language needs. A well-resourced environment conducive to language learning is provided. The speech and language therapist provides valuable support to the pupils. More detailed records of language progress should be maintained.

- Whole-school curricular planning is in place for all subjects. Most plans are contextualised to the school with clearly delineated content for each class level. There is scope to further develop the whole-school plan for Music and Visual Arts to ensure appropriate skill development and progression in pupils' learning outcomes.

- Assessment of learning practices are well developed in the school. Good examples of *assessment for learning* approaches were observed and this practice should be

progressed across the school. There is potential for the further development of pupils' self and peer-evaluation practices. Tracking of pupils' learning to ensure progress in line with ability is advised.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength in this school. A very broad variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are provided to support pupils' well-being. The voice of pupils is effectively promoted through an active pupil council and a Green Schools committee. Responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicated that most pupils like school and feel safe there.

- Good channels of communication are in place between home and school. The parents' association actively supports the school. It should consider affiliating to the National Parents' Council (Primary) to support and broaden its role. In questionnaires, all parents agreed that their child is doing well in school.

- 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 quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The board of management has been proactive in developing the school infrastructure and provides a well-resourced educational environment for pupils. It manages the school effectively and is well informed about the standards of pupil progress.

- The principal provides highly effective leadership to the school community. He places a central focus on pupils' learning and promotes distributive leadership and a shared vision for the school among staff. In questionnaires almost all staff agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school. The in-school management team undertakes a broad range of duties diligently. Members are actively involved in evaluating and monitoring curriculum implementation and promoting pupils' well-being.

5. **School Self-evaluation**

- Engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is of a high quality. SSE reports have been prepared and school improvement plans in literacy and numeracy have been developed. Review of monthly progress records, to enable the tracking of school improvement initiatives, is advised.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good. Current school self-evaluation practices indicate openness to change and to continuous improvement.

Published June 2016

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 Scoil Mhuire welcome the publication of this WSE-MLL report. The board and the entire school community are very pleased with the recognition of our good practice identified during the evaluation.

This report gives recognition to the high standards and work ethic of teaching staff, pupils, parents' association members, board of management, in-school management team and principal. It highlights the high quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management, support for pupils' well-being and provision of resources and facilities in Scoil Mhuire.

It is worth noting that none of the staff of nineteen who were surveyed disagreed with the comment 'there is a good atmosphere in the school' – fourteen strongly agreed, four agreed and one indicated 'don't know'. All members of our school community have a role in maintaining a positive school atmosphere.

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

Board of management, staff, pupils, parents' association members and principal welcome all recommendations made in this report. These will be included in our cycle of continuous improvement and development, as we seek excellence in all aspects of our school. The following actions will be taken in the short to medium term:

The Primary Language Curriculum is to be formally introduced to all staff in June 2016, whole staff training by arrangement with Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) will follow.

A whole school oral language programme, informed by the Primary Language Curriculum, will be developed and implemented. Continuing professional development with PDST facilitators will be organised for the 2016/17 school year.

The model of support teaching in Scoil Mhuire will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the school. Current practices such as station teaching, team teaching, in-class support, individual withdrawal, small group withdrawal and large group withdrawal are under review. Sustained support for particular classes or class groups will be implemented as needs arise and as resources allow.

Additional reading materials are to be added to the extensive range currently in use in all classes.

Open-ended problem solving skills in Mathematics are to be further developed. Whole staff training with PDST advisers has been organised for September 2016.

Standarised tests in Gaeilge are to be administered in selected classes in 2016 and in all classes in 2017.

The Scoil Mhuire Parents' Association has agreed to affiliate with the National Parents' Council Primary.

All other recommendations will be addressed as part of Scoil Mhuire's ongoing process of school development planning and school improvement, as we strive to continue the work of those who have gone before us and to leave a lasting legacy for those who follow.

Scoil Mhuire will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2017, this WSE-MLL report provides an objective analysis of the current work of a school which has served the community of Monaghan with distinction since July 1867.