An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

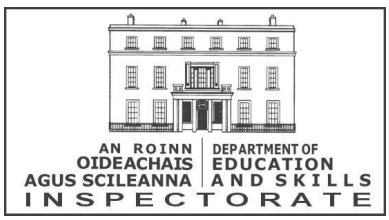
Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Mhuire
Lismackin National School
Roscrea, Co. Tipperary

Uimhir rolla: 19640R

Date of inspection: 5 March 2014



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Lismackin National School, Co. Tipperary 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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Lismackin National School is a four-teacher co-educational rural school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The school has a shared learning-support teacher and a shared resource teacher. Most pupils come from socially and culturally advantaged backgrounds. Pupil attendance is good overall.

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

- The board of management and the parents' association support the school in a conscientious manner.
- The school climate is very positive; the teachers work collaboratively to bring about school improvement and to ensure that they provide a secure and balanced education for the pupils in their care.
- The management of pupils is very good. Pupils' behaviour and application to tasks and their engagement in the learning process is very good.
- The principal provides very good leadership to the school community.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good and the school achieves very good standards in Mathematics and in English.
- A commendable approach to the teaching of Irish is adopted.
- The school is highly regarded by the pupils and parents.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Further attention should be placed on extending the teaching approaches to literacy (reading and writing). Models of in-class support for pupils should be further developed.

Findings

1. **The learning achievements of pupils**
   - The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good in English and in Mathematics. Sa Ghaeilge, tá scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí (obair labhartha, éisteachta, scríofa agus an léitheoireacht) ar chaighdeán maith. *[In Irish, pupils' communication skills (oral work, listening, writing and reading) are of a good standard.]*

   - The teachers use a variety of assessment methods and these include teacher-devised and commercial tests, standardised tests and checklists to monitor pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills. Results from standardised tests in English and in Mathematics are monitored and whole-school trends are graphed. It is recommended that assessment results be further analysed to inform teaching and learning and to differentiate the provision for pupils in the mainstream class settings.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- The overall quality of teaching is good with very good practice in evidence in some class settings. In general, whole-class teaching is the main methodology utilised. Further attention should be given to differentiating provision for pupils in mainstream class setting by class group and by ability level.

- The quality of lessons observed in English is good. The pupils' phonics and phonological skills are developed comprehensively in the infant and junior classes. *Aistear*, which focuses on pupils' play, is implemented in the infant classes and this provides a springboard for the development of pupils' oral language skills. At each class level, there is formal instruction in the development of speaking and listening skills and this is a commendable development. Comprehension skills are being introduced and this work should be complemented by placing additional focus on developing reading fluency. Pupils' written work is neatly presented and well monitored. It is recommended that writing skills be further developed and a genres approach to writing implemented. To enhance pupils' reading further, it is recommended that differentiated instruction be prioritised and an approach such as *Literacy Lift Off* be implemented in the infant and junior classes. Guided reading is recommended as a suitable intervention for middle and senior classes.

- The quality of teaching in Mathematics is good and a variety of methodologies is used during lessons. Commendable emphasis is placed on teaching the language of Mathematics and lessons link effectively with pupils' experiences. The strategies underpinning *Ready, Set, Go Maths* are implemented in the infant classes and this work is very praiseworthy. When questioned, pupils displayed good knowledge of the concepts taught. To further develop the approaches undertaken, it is recommended that a programme such as *Mata sa Rang*, which emphasises intensive group or class-based teaching, be implemented.

- Sa Ghaeilge, tá scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí ar chaighdeán maith. Forbraítear scileanna léitheoireachta go céimniúil agus sna hardranganna léann na daltaí go cumasach. Cé go gtugtar faoi chleachtaí scríbhneoireachta go rialta, ní foláir scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach a chleachtadh níos minicí. Moltar anois tuilleadh béime a chur ar na briathra chun cleachtadh a thabhairt do na daltaí ar na haimsirí éagsúla. *[In Irish the communication skills of the pupils are good. Reading skills are developed systematically and the pupils' read their textbooks with mastery. While writing exercises are undertaken regularly, it is recommended that creative writing be practised frequently. It is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on verbs and additional practice given to the pupils on various tenses.]*

- The quality of supports for pupils with learning difficulties is good. The teachers, together with the special needs assistants, provide good care and support for pupils with special educational needs. Learning support provision includes supports for individual pupils and small groups of pupils in literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching observed in support settings is commendable. To build on the provision in the school, further attention needs to be given to developing models of in-class support and working collaboratively with mainstream class teachers to support literacy initiatives, particularly at the infant and junior class levels. Individual education plans and group learning programmes are devised and are shared with parents and teachers. Learning targets are devised for each pupil. There is a need to ensure that specific and measurable learning targets are defined and monitored regularly for all pupils receiving supports. The provision of a greater range of diagnostic assessment data is required to inform these specific targets and to measure individual pupil progress.

- The school provides a very broad range of co-curricular activities for the pupils.

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

- The school nurtures a positive learning environment and the pupils are very engaged in their learning and work purposefully. The management of pupils is very good and the principal, together with all staff members, fosters a culture of mutual respect and the well-being and social and emotional development of pupils are prioritised.

- 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 teaching principal is a reflective practitioner and she displays well-developed organisational, administrative and interpersonal skills which enable her to manage the school very effectively. She is well supported by the members of the in-school management team and the whole staff who invest considerable energy into creating a positive and respectful school climate. The in-school management team meets regularly and carries out its duties conscientiously. It is recommended that the duties assigned to staff members should reflect the priorities outlined in the school action plan for improvement. The staff members display very good commitment to the individual welfare needs and the holistic development of the pupils The school secretary provides valuable support for the organisation of the school.

- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school. The board members carry out their duties diligently and they contribute to the school organisation according to their particular professional talents and backgrounds. School accounts are certified annually. Members of the board have availed of training provided by the school patron. The board has overseen the refurbishment of the school building in 2009 and has provided for a range of educational resources in the school. The school building and grounds are well maintained.

- The parents' association works in close collaboration with school personnel to support the work of the school. Strong links have been established between the school and the local community and home-school communication is very good. Parent volunteers assist with the celebration of religious events, the organisation of school sporting activities and with the maintenance of the school. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction with the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The process of school self-evluation is progressing well. Commendable work has been undertaken by the principal in leading the whole-school planning process. A school self-evaluation report has been drafted and a school improvement plan (SIP) has been devised for literacy and numeracy. To assist the staff in outlining specific targets for improvement, there is a need to generate assessment data in relation to pupils' comprehension and oral language skills and these data will assist in benchmarking progress which may result from the implementation of any initiatives or interventions. It is recommended that members of the in-school management team should have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the targets in the SIP.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is good.

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