An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

St Joseph's Primary School,
Kilmuckridge, Gorey, Co Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 14903V

Date of inspection: 01 June 2016

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in St. Joseph's Primary School in June 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 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.

St. Joseph's is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are 220 pupils enrolled. While the attendance levels of the majority of pupils is very good, the attendance of a small minority of pupils is a cause for concern.

The evaluation has found:

- Overall, pupils are attaining good and very good levels of learning achievement across the curriculum.
- Overall, pupils are achieving at highly commendable levels in Mathematics. There is scope to further develop pupils' abilities to use the Irish language independently and to enhance pupils' writing skills in English.
- Teaching in mainstream and support settings across the school is of a high quality overall, with some exemplary practices observed during the evaluation.
- Teachers have developed a range of effective assessment practices to monitor pupil achievement; further use of assessment information would be beneficial.
- Support for pupils' well-being is very good and the school is characterised by its warm and welcoming atmosphere; the teachers and staff demonstrate a keen understanding of individual pupils and their holistic development.
- The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is good and the principal leads and manages the work of the school very effectively.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Assessment information should be used to guide differentiated programmes of learning in all classes in order to accommodate the full range of pupil ability levels.
- In order to develop pupils' confidence and competence in using the Irish language, there is a need for greater clarity around expectations for pupils' learning and the provision of regular opportunities for pupils to write independently and to read at a more appropriate instructional level.
- To develop pupils' writing further in English, opportunities for a more sustained engagement with the writing genres, with an emphasis on ensuring the incremental development of pupils' skills, should be provided.

Findings

1. **The learning achievements of pupils**
    - Overall, pupils are attaining good and very good levels of learning achievement across the curriculum. The pupils demonstrate a very positive attitude to learning and engage in the good range of activities provided with a high level of interest and enthusiasm. In the questionnaire responses, almost all pupils report that they like their school and most confirm that they enjoy their lessons and learning.

- Overall, the quality of pupils' achievement in English is good. The school's recent focus on the development of pupils' oral language and comprehension skills, as part of the school self-evaluation process, is welcomed. Pupils read at good and very good levels. In order to progress reading skills further, a more overt focus on developing pupils' reading fluency skills is advised. In their questionnaires, most pupils state that they think they are doing well at reading. Pupils have benefitted from engaging in writing across a wider variety of genres. Opportunities for more sustained engagement with the writing genres, ensuring the spiral development of pupils' skills, together with the contextualisation of grammatical learning, will develop pupils' writing further.
- Overall, pupils are achieving at highly commendable levels in Mathematics. The school has rightly identified pupils' problem-solving skills as an area to be developed and has taken positive steps to address this. Where pupil learning is richest, pupils engage in good quality collaboration while comfortably hypothesising and justifying during problem-solving tasks. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to extend learning.
- *I roinnt ranganna, tá sé ar chumas na ndaltaí páirt a ghlacadh i gcumarsáid agus an teanga a úsáid le muinín. I ranganna eile, tá scóip le cumas na ndaltaí an teanga a úsáid go neamhspleách a fhorbairt. Chun gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt ar bhonn uile-scoile, moltar tagarmharcanna, le cuspóirí foghlama atá soiléir do gach rang ghrúpa, a shocrú agus deiseanna rialta a thabhairt do dhaltaí scríobh go neamhspleách agus léamh ar leibhéal teagaisc níos oiriúnaí sa léitheoireacht.*
  In some classes, pupils are able to engage in conversation and use the language with confidence. In other classes, there is scope to develop pupils' abilities to use the language independently. In order to improve the pupils' learning achievements in Irish on a whole-school basis, the establishment of agreed benchmarks for learning, which identify specific learning targets for pupils at each class level is recommended. Regular opportunities for pupils to write independently and read at a more appropriate instructional level should also be provided.
- Pupils' engagement in Arts Education is commended and attractive displays of their work across a wide range of media are in evidence. The recently established instrumental music group and the emphasis on promoting pupils' physical fitness are praised. In Social Environmental and Scientific Education, very valuable links between pupils' learning and real-life contexts are explored though purposeful, skills-based learning.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- The quality of teaching is high overall, with some exemplary practices observed during the evaluation. Teachers have embraced a range of new teaching and learning initiatives. Where practice is most effective there is an explicit focus on the teaching of specific skills and the provision of engaging, collaborative experiences for pupils. The regular and effective consolidation of learning is also in evidence. In the questionnaires, almost all parents report that they think teaching is good in the school.
- A positive feature of the school's planning for teaching and learning is its agreed whole-school approach to assessment. Teachers have developed a range of effective assessment practices which monitor pupil achievement. In some learning settings, the analysis of this information is being used well to guide differentiated programmes of learning to accommodate the range of abilities in classes. Such good practices should be extended to all learning settings.
- Overall, the quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good and pupils with additional needs achieve positive learning outcomes. Generally, teaching is purposeful, needs driven and lessons are well structured and suitably challenging for the learners.
- In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils presenting for additional support, which is provided by two full-time and a number of shared support teachers. The co-ordination and deployment of these resources is highly commended.

- In order to further develop provision, a greater balance between support delivered in withdrawal and in-class settings should be achieved. Efforts should also be made to use members of the team in a consultancy mode in order to support the establishment of further differentiated provision in classes.

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

- Support for pupils' well-being is very good. The school is characterised by its warm and welcoming atmosphere. The teachers and staff demonstrate a keen understanding of individual pupils and their holistic development. In the questionnaires, almost all parents state that their child feels safe, is well looked after and is helped with their social and personal development.
- Analysis of the results of the pupil questionnaires indicate the need to develop pupil voice further. The establishment of a Student Council or other such fora to involve pupils in age-appropriate decision making should be considered.
- Good quality relationships with parents and the wider community are encouraged and parents are very supportive of the work of the school. Almost all parents indicate that they feel welcome and are happy with the school. However, the parent questionnaire responses highlight the potential for seeking the views of parents on school matters more regularly. Further opportunities to promote parental involvement in relevant policy formation and in-class activities should also be advanced.

  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 overall quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The board, together with the principal, has played a significant role in the development of the school building and grounds in recent years. The newly-established board is very supportive of the school. Members of the board plan to attend future training opportunities. The board is advised to compile a strategic plan for the development of priorities for the board's term and to provide an annual report to the general parent population. The board is also advised to strengthen the school's attendance policy by developing an overt attendance strategy to promote and monitor attendance levels.
- The principal leads and manages the work of the school very effectively. He successfully promotes a culture of teamwork, co-operation and positive working relationships across the school community. He has ensured that significant progress has been made in updating the whole-school planning process and facilitates the implementation of new teaching approaches to improve pupil learning.
- The members of the in-school management team carry out their assigned duties diligently. This adds considerably to the smooth running of the school. The regular review of members' duties is commended. In order to develop their instructional leadership capacity further, it is recommended that their role in the monitoring of the implementation of teaching and learning initiatives and the review of learning achievements be strengthened. To assist in facilitating this, formal management meetings should be established.

5. **School Self-evaluation**

- The school has made a positive start to the school self-evaluation process in literacy and numeracy. The school should now review the implementation of agreed actions in order to ensure that they are achieving the intended improvements in learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to develop further is very good.

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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 and school community of St.Joseph's Primary School welcome the Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) report which affirms the high quality of teaching and the effective leadership that exists in our school. We note the positive references to the care and well-being of our students and acknowledge the positive comments in relation to the effective management of our school by the board of management, in-school management team and principal. The board of management welcomes the advice and recommendations delivered.

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 and staff of St.Joseph's Primary School wish to acknowledge the recommendations delivered in this WSE - MLL report. We will embrace the advice offered and implement the changes recommended. Our school plan and relevant documentation will reflect all changes as we continuously strive for higher standards of teaching and learning in our school.