

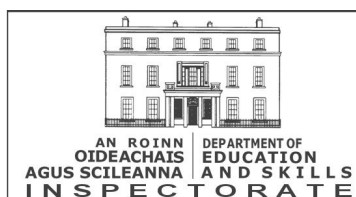
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire
Bornacoola, Carrick-on-Shannon
County Leitrim
Uimhir rolla: 19554B

Date of inspection: 18 November 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Bornacoola, 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 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 Náisiúnta Mhuire is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. Currently, there are ninety-one pupils enrolled across three mainstream classes. Attendance rates are very good. The school has a team of three part-time learning-support personnel.

The evaluation has found:

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are good. There is scope to develop pupils' oral competency in Irish and to ensure a broader curricular balance in the programme of learning.
- There is good-quality provision in place for most pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- There is scope to develop aspects of teaching in the school, including enhanced use of collaborative learning approaches and more explicit provision for differentiation within the multi-grade setting.
- Pastoral care provision is of a high quality.
- There is need to extend the channels of communication with all parents.
- The work of the board of management requires significant improvement.
- While the quality of the school self-evaluation process is good overall, targets could be defined more accurately.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Ní mór scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt go céimniúil tríd an scoil.
Pupils' speaking skills in Irish should be developed incrementally throughout the school.
- Teachers should ensure that pupils are provided with a broad and balanced programme of learning especially in arts education and Science and that greater emphasis be placed on developing pupils' skills.
- Teachers should use a wider range of collaborative teaching methodologies and afford pupils greater opportunities to experience pair work and co-operative learning.
- The whole-school planning process and classroom planning—including interventions for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)—should be further developed to include explicit learning objectives and detail associated differentiation and assessment strategies in the multi-class setting.
- The board of management should hold regular meetings, ensure accounts are certified annually and formulate a strategic plan for the future development of the school.

- The board of management should facilitate the establishment of a parents' association to enhance the consultative process between home and school and to extend parental involvement.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are good. While they experience a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, teachers should ensure that pupils are provided with a broad and balanced programme of learning especially in arts education and Science. In questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, most pupils agreed that they enjoy lessons and learning.
- Pupils are achieving good learning outcomes in English literacy. Most pupils have good speaking skills; in some instances however, listening skills are under developed. Phonological awareness and word-attack skills are well developed. Individual reading attainment, especially for the more able pupils, should be further advanced through the use of graded reading material. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of writing genres. As the quality of their written work is inconsistent, a whole-school approach to the development of handwriting, spelling and work presentation should be adopted.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in numeracy is good. Suitable emphasis is placed on the development of mathematical language and pupils demonstrate good knowledge of basic number facts. In some classes, content is connected effectively to the life experience of the pupils. The promotion of a mathematics-rich environment with associated mathematics trails and the development of collaborative problem solving would further enhance provision.
- Tá scóip chun caighdeán na Gaeilge a fheabhsú ar bhonn scoile-uile. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go cumasach. Cuirtear béim chuí ar dhánta agus ar rannta tríd an scoil. Ní foláir, áfach, béim níos láidre a chur ar úsáid na mbriathra i gcomhthéascanna éagsúla chun scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Chun tógáil go céimniúil ar fhorbairt teanga na ndaltaí, b'fhiú plean céimnithe a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm don labhairt ar bhonn scoile-uile. Tá cumas léitheoireachta agus tuisceana mórchuid na ndaltaí sásúil.

There is scope to improve the standard of Irish across the school. Pupils' listening skills are developed competently. Suitable emphasis is placed on poems and rhymes throughout the school. However, to further develop pupils' oral skills, it is recommended that a stronger emphasis be placed on using verbs in a variety of contexts. It would be worthwhile to devise and implement an incremental whole-school oral plan to develop pupils' speaking skills systematically. The reading and comprehension abilities of the majority of pupils are satisfactory.

2. Quality of teaching

- There is scope for development with regard to certain aspects of teaching in the school. Whole-class teaching was the dominant methodology employed during the evaluation. While a number of collaborative learning activities were observed, scope exists for the much greater use of pair work and co-operative learning across the school. It is recommended that lessons be underpinned by clear learning objectives and that explicit provision be made for differentiation within the multi-grade setting. Teaching in Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) should further promote the development of pupils' investigative skills and enable them to engage further in project work.
- Overall, the quality of teaching provided for most pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Pupils with SEN engage confidently in learning and are making progress commensurate with their ability. Overall, planning for SEN is of a good quality. Where planning was very good, learning priorities aligned very closely with professional recommendations, learning targets were specific and measurable and progress was

regularly monitored. Such elements of very good plans should be shared and adopted by all of the SEN team.

- There is scope for development in the provision of support for pupils with EAL. Diagnostic tests should be used to ascertain pupils' learning needs. The identification of target language and the recording of pupils' progress would enhance the quality of this provision. The school should prioritise the development of a policy on EAL provision.
- There is scope for development in the quality of classroom planning. While some planning was good, considerable variation was found in the quality of teachers' classroom planning. In some instances, planning was unavailable for inspection; this is unsatisfactory practice. While all teachers provide monthly progress records, the utilisation of these records as a means to monitor more carefully curriculum implementation across the school should be developed.
- The quality of whole-school planning is good. Practical organisational and administrative policies have been devised. While curricular plans are in place for all subjects, they require further development. Content should be delineated clearly for each class level to ensure progression in pupils' learning outcomes and to guide classroom planning.
- Assessment of learning practices, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are well developed. The implementation of aspects of *assessment for learning* (AfL) in some classrooms is commendable. To augment this good practice, all teachers should correct pupils' work regularly and give feedback to encourage improvement; currently, in some instances, this is not undertaken to an appropriate level.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pastoral care provision is of a high quality. Pupils are cared for and supported effectively. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, show that less than half of the pupils indicated that they have a say in how things are done in the school. The introduction of a student council would facilitate and promote the pupils' voice within the 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

- Overall, there is room to improve the leadership and management of this school. The work of the board of management requires significant improvement. Meetings are not held regularly. The board should convene a minimum of one meeting per term and not less than five meetings each school year, in line with the *Rules of Procedures of Boards of Management* (2011). The board should ensure that accounts are certified annually in accordance with section 18(1) of the Education Act, 1998. Financial contributions from parents towards tuition for co-curricular activities in Music should be discontinued.
- In order to bring about sustained and systematic improvement, the board should formulate a strategic plan for the future development of the school. This plan should include the identification of whole-school priorities and a cyclical plan for the review and development of curricular and organisational policies. It should also consider the ongoing development of the schools' indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- The teaching principal carries out day-to-day management responsibilities in a capable manner. A greater focus should now be placed on curriculum leadership and on progressing teaching and learning in the school. The role and responsibilities of the deputy principal should be reviewed to respond to the evolving needs of the school and include a balance of curricular, organisational and pastoral duties. All school registers should be maintained with appropriate detail, having regard to the provisions of Circular 33/2015.

- Currently, the school does not have a parents' association. The board of management should facilitate the establishment a parents' association in line with section 26 of the Education Act. There is a need to extend the channels of communication with all parents and to enable parental involvement in the overall functioning of the school. Responses to questionnaires, reveal levels of dissatisfaction among a considerable number of parents with regard to communication. This issue should be examined by the board with a view to identifying the underlying causes and taking steps to address them.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The quality of engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) is good. A SSE report and a school improvement plan for literacy and numeracy have been devised. There is scope to define targets more accurately and to outline more clearly the actions required in each classroom for successful implementation. It is now timely to issue a summary school-improvement plan to the whole school community.

Conclusion

While the work undertaken in SSE shows a definite commitment to bring about improvement, the school's capacity to develop further is contingent upon the development of leadership and management and on progressing teaching and learning. It is strongly advised that support be sought from the external school support services in working towards improvement.

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 NS welcomes the positive findings of the report which found good overall learning achievements of pupils in our school, good quality provision for pupils with Special Education Needs and high quality pastoral care provision for all pupils.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire school teaching and support staff for their dedication and professionalism in the provision of education to and care towards the pupils of our school. The Board would also like to acknowledge the excellent response rate of the parent body to the Parental Questionnaire that formed part of the inspection process which indicated very high satisfaction rates with pupils learning outcomes and very high satisfaction rates with regard to overall happiness with the school.

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 welcomes the recommendations of the Inspectorate in relation to the Board of Management and plans to incorporate them into its forward planning. The Board looks forward to working closely with the teaching staff in supporting them in every way possible in implementing the teaching and learning recommendations contained in the report.

