

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

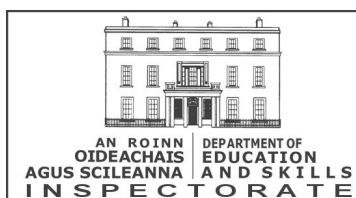
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

**St. Joseph's National School  
Mulhussey, Kilcock, Co Meath  
Uimhir rolla: 18887A**

**Date of inspection: 6 November 2013**



## 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 NS, Mulhussey in November 2013. 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 school has an enrolment of 74 pupils. Enrolment trends have increased slightly in recent times and pupil attendance is very good. 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.

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

- The quality of teaching in the school is good.
- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are commendable.
- There is evidence of effective collaboration across the school community.
- The school provides high quality care for the pupils.
- Classrooms are presented as very attractive and stimulating learning environments.
- The pupils are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and they demonstrate commendable levels of independence and co-operation during learning activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The deployment of teachers for pupils with special educational needs, and the co-ordination of additional support for these pupils should be reviewed to ensure that programmes of prevention, intervention and additional support are delivered in a flexible, targeted, and cohesive manner.
- The differentiation of learning tasks for pupils is recommended.
- It is recommended that targets for school improvement are more clearly linked to the interpretation of baseline data.
- The delivery of one aspect of the curriculum is funded by parents, and is currently facilitated by an external tutor. The board should review this practice.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievement of the pupils is good. They engaged well with the lessons observed and many pupils displayed a commendable level of knowledge across a range of curricular areas during the evaluation.
- The pupils are enabled to take responsibility for their learning and demonstrate commendable levels of independence and co-operation during learning activities.
- Achievement in numeracy is of a high standard. Most pupils demonstrate good recall of facts and understanding of concepts. However, there is scope for improvement in their application of problem-solving strategies in Mathematics.
- Standards in English reading are good for a significant number of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and information. The school should make further investment in the acquisition of up-to-date library books and additional graded reading materials. Pupils display very good oral competencies in English.
- Léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint mhaith sa Ghaeilge. B'fhiú a scileanna cumarsáide a leathnú go céimniúil. *Pupils demonstrate good understanding in Irish. Their communication skills should be incrementally extended.*

- Good standards are achieved in the Visual Arts and, in Music, pupils are enabled to play the recorder with great enthusiasm and good levels of skill.
- In the special education settings, many pupils are making satisfactory progress commensurate with their abilities.

## 2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is good with some highly effective practice observed in particular lessons. While suitable methodologies are capably used in all settings, there is scope to differentiate pupils' learning tasks.
- Classrooms are presented as very attractive and stimulating learning environments.
- Moltar níos mó béime a chur ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach sa Ghaeilge agus níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí an teanga a labhairt go nádúrtha.  
*(It is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on the communicative approach in Irish and that more opportunities to speak the language naturally are provided for the pupils.)*
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is characterised by good preparation and effective teaching approaches. In the main, support is provided through the withdrawal of individual pupils and particular classes for additional support. The deployment of teachers for pupils with SEN, and the co-ordination of this additional provision should be reviewed, to ensure a flexible, targeted and a cohesive approach in its delivery.

## 3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pupils are cared for and supported in a highly commendable manner. A positive atmosphere is evident in all settings and it is commendable that pupils' efforts, as well as their achievements, are recognised and appropriately celebrated.
- Pupils' pastoral needs are satisfied very effectively. In a response to the inspectorate questionnaire, all pupils surveyed indicated that they know what to do if someone is being bullied, and that they feel safe in the class. Pupils enjoy successful participation in a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. A book-rental scheme, operated by the school, minimises costs for parents.
- 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 board of management is highly committed to the school. It has overseen considerable improvements to the school's facilities. Its regular consideration of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evidenced in the minutes of board meetings.
- The principal has given very dedicated service to the school. In collaboration with the deputy principal he actively promotes school development and encourages the teachers to engage in continuing professional development. The results from the inspectorate survey indicate that the majority of parents are happy with the work of the school and that the school is welcoming of parents.
- The collaboration of the school community in the development of particular whole-school administrative policies has been successful in more recent times.
- The contextualisation of particular curricular policies and the completion of planning for all curricular areas should be prioritised.
- The delivery of one aspect of the curriculum is funded by parents, and is currently facilitated by an external tutor. The board should review this practice.

## **5. School Self-evaluation**

- The school has embarked enthusiastically on the process of school self-evaluation. The longitudinal tracking and analysis of individual pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy is praised.
- Specific targets have been outlined for the development of numeracy. While the analysis of standardised test scores has guided the target-setting process, it is recommended that improvement targets are more clearly linked to the interpretation of baseline data. The specific implementation strategies and the measurable outcomes by which achievement of the targets will be measured should be clarified.

## **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is very good. The in-school management team and staff engaged very openly with the evaluation process and displayed a commendable capacity for reflection and collaboration.