

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

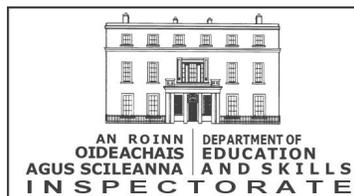
**Whole School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

**Saint Patrick's N.S.,  
Edmonton,  
Killucan,  
County Westmeath.**

**Uimhir rolla: 08100U**

**Date of Inspection 12 May 2015**



## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St. Patrick's National School, Edmonton, Killucan, County Westmeath, in May 2015. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal, Deputy Principal, and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and review of school documents. The board of management of the school 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. Patrick's National School is a co-educational primary school with a current enrolment of 72 pupils. Attendance levels are very good, and pupil enrolment has been increasing in recent years. A whole-school emphasis on health and fitness ensures that pupils engage in a wide range of physical activities, and are achieving high levels of fitness and well-being.

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

- A positive school atmosphere pertains and pupils in all classes engage enthusiastically in their lessons and learning.
- The Principal provides very effective administrative and curriculum leadership, and teachers are motivated to work as a team to introduce new whole-school initiatives and to bring about school improvements.
- The dedicated board of management is well-informed and is highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The overall quality of teaching is high, with very effective practice across a number of settings and curriculum subjects.
- Management and teachers demonstrate very high levels of collaboration and commitment in advancing the educational and physical development of the pupils.
- A whole-school approach to Physical Education (PE) is a highly commendable feature of the support provided for pupil well-being.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school is advised to develop writing across the genres and writing for audiences as part of its whole-school approach to literacy.
- Teachers are recommended to include collaborative learning opportunities, and problem solving approaches in lessons across all subjects.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum, with opportunities for paired and group work incorporated into many lessons. Pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons, and demonstrate good levels of learning, knowledge, and skills development.
- In Gaeilge, pupils competently utilise learned language skills. They ask and answer questions, recite poems and songs, and are interested and well-motivated. In middle and senior classes pupils would benefit from further opportunities to converse meaningfully with each other in pairs and in groups.

- Pupils from Junior Infants to sixth class engage in the writing process, through writers workshop and free writing. They effectively use mind maps, graphic organisers, and brainstorming strategies. Pupils should now be afforded opportunities to develop their writing skills through a structured approach to writing across the genres.
- Praiseworthy learning achievements were noted in Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), where active learning is facilitated, and where pupils work as scientists as they discuss, observe, and monitor fair testing in experiments. In Music, pupils perform an extensive repertoire of songs with enthusiasm in both Irish and English. They are afforded opportunities to listen and respond to music, and to discuss their musical preferences. Pupils from first to sixth class play the tin whistle skilfully and with very evident enjoyment.

## 2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is high, with very effective practice observed across a number of settings and curriculum subjects. Teaching is focused and purposeful. ICT is very well utilised, together with an appropriate variety of additional teacher designed and other resources to support learning and comprehension.
- Infant classes experience play-based learning through a carefully structured Aistear Programme. In Mathematics, teachers include talk and discussion, and explicit teaching of mathematical language and terminology. Opportunities for good quality paired and group work are incorporated into many lessons across the curriculum. To build on this good practice teachers are recommended to include collaborative learning opportunities, and to incorporate a problem solving approach to teaching and learning in lessons across all subjects, but particularly in core curriculum subjects.
- Penmanship, spellings, poetry, phonics, oral language development and free writing strategies are cultivated as components of the school's literacy programme. Written work is well presented and carefully corrected. To draw together the components of the literacy programme, a structured whole-school approach to genre writing is now advised.
- All teachers prepare very well for lessons, and have good quality planning and assessments documents. Further review of the classroom short term planning template and content should be undertaken to provide a more practical and useful guide for teachers.
- Comprehensive and informative assessment records are maintained by teachers. The What Are We Learning Today (WALT) strategy is used throughout the school. WALT should be more explicitly linked to assessments, to facilitate pupil self-assessment, and to link into the *Assessment for Learning* (NCCA AfL) strategy.
- Parent questionnaire responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and all parents agree that their child is doing well in school, and that overall they are happy with the school.

## 3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pupils are well-managed, and were courteous, friendly and welcoming during the evaluation. In pupil questionnaires pupils reported that they have a say in how things are done in the school. They were aware of the school rules against hurting each other, and felt safe in the classroom and playground. All pupils agreed that their school was a good school.
- Pupils with special educational needs are purposefully and meaningfully included in class work and in school activities and extra curricular events. Support teaching is provided through a balance of in-class support and individual and small-group teaching. When planning support timetables, teachers need to be mindful that

learning support should be provided as additional teaching, and not in place of main class literacy and numeracy.

- All pupils partake in the whole-school PE activity programme. This highly commended programme is very successfully employed in promoting physical fitness and well-being in pupils. Activities are led by a very competent Active School Flag committee. Pupils said they enjoyed being fit, and they enjoyed the structure that the programme delivered.
- The Special Needs Assistants provide very good quality support for the pupils in their care. Ancillary staff work diligently to support the smooth running of 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**

- A positive school atmosphere pertains in the school. The Principal provides very effective administrative and curriculum leadership. Teachers are motivated to work as a team to introduce new whole-school initiatives and to bring about school improvement. The deputy principal works closely with the principal. They meet regularly both formally and informally to manage long and short term issues.
- The dedicated board of management is well-informed and is highly supportive of the work of the school. High levels of collaboration and co-operation with local schools have been forged, to ensure good practice in pupil enrolment and transfer.
- The school is one of two schools which are involved in the Quantum Leaps Pilot. This programme is designed to empower optimal learning through an holistic and multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning. Improved learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy are anticipated as a result of engaging with the intervention pilot programme.
- Relationships and communications within the school, and with the wider school community are very successfully managed. There is an active Parents' Association, and parents are involved in, and supportive of the work of the school. Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction in relation to how they are kept informed about the work of the school and the board, and about their children's learning progress.

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

- The process of school self-evaluation (SSE) is well embedded in classrooms and at whole-school level. Areas for development have been identified in literacy, numeracy, and physical education. A three year school improvement plan for each curriculum area has been devised and agreed SSE strategies are in evidence in classrooms and as part of a whole-school programme. A fourth subject for SSE is under consideration.

#### **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to improve is very good. High levels of cooperation, collaboration, and professional development among staff have been established. The board, principal, and staff demonstrate commendable commitment to the development of the school and to improving teaching and learning.

# Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board found the inspection to be both positive and affirming. We welcome the acknowledgement of the high standards of teaching, learning and pupil enthusiasm to learning in the school. We are pleased with the recognition of the affirming learning atmosphere. The board acknowledges the high levels of staff collaboration and staff commitment to the development of the pupils and to the dedication of the board to its role. The board welcomes the inspector's commendation regarding the active school flag process with in the school.

**Area 2 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 acknowledge the recommendations made in the report and we plan to incorporate them in our school Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2015/ 2016.