

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills



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

**St James' National School,
Durrus, Bantry, Co Cork
Uimhir rolla: 17050J**

Date of inspection: 10th February 2014

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in St James' primary school in February 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

The school is located near Durrus village which is eight kilometres south west of Bantry in Co Cork. It has an enrolment of 31 pupils and attendance levels are very good. The school has a teaching principal, one mainstream class teacher, and learning-support and resource teachers both of whom are shared with other schools in the area.

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

- The board of management is very committed and discharges its duties in a decidedly effective manner.
- The school is led by a highly effective principal with clear vision who is ably supported by a diligent deputy principal.
- The school building and environs are maintained to a high standard and classrooms are well resourced.
- There are high levels of parental involvement in the school.
- Pupils are well behaved, courteous, respectful and consider their school to be a happy environment.
- High standards of teaching and learning were noted in the lessons observed in classrooms and support settings.

The following areas **require improvement**:

- The deployment of the learning support teacher to teach curricular subjects in mainstream classroom settings only should be reviewed as a matter of priority.
- It is recommended that a wider range of subjects be incorporated into the assessment process in the school.
- Moltar réimse níos leithne abhar léitheoireachta a chothú sna hardranganna. *The provision of a broader range of reading material in the senior classes is recommended.*
- It is recommended that the range of duties assigned to the deputy principal be reviewed in accordance with the changing needs and priorities of the school.
- It is recommended that the curricular plan for English be reviewed as an extension of the good work already undertaken in the school self-evaluation process.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good. Pupil progress is closely monitored and the use of assessment data to target areas for development in pupil learning is well established.
- In English, pupils display confidence in both oral and written expression. Graded readers, core texts and novels are used with commendable effect and high quality samples of pupils' work were noted in copybooks and classroom displays.
- Pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a high standard. The effective use of concrete materials and pupils' proficiency in the use of mathematical language and problem-solving are particularly noteworthy features of provision. Availing of opportunities to relate mathematical concepts and operations more closely to the pupils' immediate and familiar environments would further enhance provision.
- Tá caighdeán maith bainte amach sa Ghaeilge trasna na scoile. Tá foclóir leathan acu agus tá siad in ann labhairt go leanúnach ar thopaicí áirithe. Léann said le brí agus le tuiscint. Chun cur leis an dea-chleachtas seo, moltar réimse níos leithne ábhar léitheoireachta a chothú sna hádranganna. *Pupils generally have a good standard of Irish. They possess a wide range of vocabulary and they display an ability to speak in a confident manner on specific topics. They read with expression and understanding. To further build on this good practice, the provision of a broader range of reading material in the senior classes is recommended.*
- Attractive displays of pupils' visual art work demonstrate the school's commitment to the arts and in particular to the achievement of high quality pupil learning outcomes in this area.
- A good range of assessment practices is in use in the school. Data is analysed and effective records are maintained. Pupils' written work is regularly monitored and positive evaluative comments are provided by the teachers. It is recommended that a wider range of subjects be incorporated into the assessment process in the school.
- Pupils attending special education support settings engage very positively in their learning activities.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in this school is very good. Teachers exhibit a depth of experience in their effective employment a wide range of appropriate and engaging methodologies to foster collaborative and active learning in multi-class settings. Learning environments are well organised and feature stimulating learning resources and displays of pupils' work. Teacher preparation and planning are systematic and clearly inform a focused approach to curriculum implementation.
- Teachers working with special educational needs (SEN) are professional and committed to appropriately addressing the needs of pupils. There is evidence of good planning practices. Individual educational plans (IEPs) are in place for pupils in receipt of resource teaching. The deployment of the learning support teacher to teach curricular subjects in mainstream classroom settings only should be reviewed as a matter of priority.

3. Support for pupil's well-being

- There is an excellent level of care for pupils in this school. There is a vibrant inclusive atmosphere in which pupils are happy, courteous and respectful. Pupils' efforts are acknowledged positively at all times by school staff. Teachers demonstrate very good insights into the needs and abilities of the pupils and effective examples of differentiated provision in classrooms were observed.

- The SNA, secretary, caretaker and cleaning staff all greatly assist in the day-to-day operation of the school and their influence on school practices is clearly visible.
- 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 and discharges its duties in a very effective manner. Board members have clearly designated roles have a wide range of skills. The board has been instrumental in ensuring the school building and grounds are very well maintained and resourced. A key feature of the board has been its support for all aspects of provision in the schools which include the introduction of new initiatives, the provision of extra-curricular activities and the continuous professional development of school staff.
- The principal is innovative, deeply committed and displays a clear vision for the school. She, with the assistance of the diligent deputy principal, builds a positive learning environment for members of the school community. It is recommended that the range of duties assigned to the deputy principal be reviewed in accordance with the changing needs and priorities of the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged in a systematic process of self-evaluation which involved analysis of assessment data and collaboration with parents' and pupils. A self-evaluation report has been issued and a three-year improvement plan focussing on comprehension in literacy provision has been formulated. It is recommended that the curricular plan for English be reviewed as an extension of the good work already undertaken in the school self-evaluation process

Conclusion

This school's capacity to develop further is very good. The school community is motivated, capable and highly committed to the school. The collective engagement in the school self-evaluation process to date is evidence of the staff's commitment to the concept of reflective practice.