

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

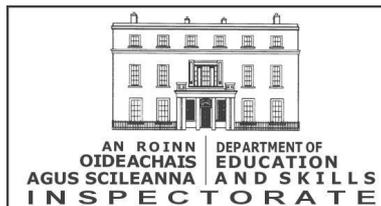
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Parteen National School
Parteen, Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla: 16946D**

Date of inspection: 05 March 2015



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Parteen National School in March 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, chairperson of the board of management and chairperson of the parents' association, completed parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires, and a selection 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.

Parteen National School is a co-educational primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. It is situated in Parteen, Co. Clare, approximately four miles from Limerick City. The school has an administrative principal, fourteen mainstream class teachers and five learning support/resource teachers, all of whom are based in the school. It also has part-time access to the services of a learning support/resource teacher who is shared with another school. There were 377 pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation and there has been considerable growth in enrolment figures over the past number of years. School attendance levels are very good.

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

- Very good provision is made, overall, for a very broad and balanced education. The school's commitment to developing and ensuring an inclusive learning environment is excellent.
- A very positive school climate pervades all aspects of school life. A strong spirit of collaboration is evident among all staff members.
- The overall quality of teaching observed during the evaluation ranged from satisfactory to excellent, with the majority of lessons in the good to very good range.
- Overall learning achievements of pupils are very good throughout the school.
- Pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning. They demonstrate excellent levels of behaviour and engagement.
- The principal and in-school management team exhibit strong and purposeful leadership skills.
- All staff members are strongly committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils. The school's ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the work of the school.
- The school is managed very effectively by a dedicated and pro-active board of management.
- Parental support and involvement in school life is valued and welcomed.
- The recently-extended school building and external areas are very well maintained. Very attractive, well-organised learning and classroom environments are provided.
- A very extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- An extended and revised model of in-class support teaching provision should be prioritised and implemented to ensure that the level of pupil withdrawal from mainstream classes for support teaching is reduced.
- Further attention should be given to differentiated instruction in mainstream classes, particularly in English. Formative assessment, pupil self-assessment and assessment for learning strategies should be further developed at all class levels.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall learning achievements of pupils are very good throughout the school. Evidence available in the school and obtained during the evaluation indicates that pupils are making very good progress in their learning. Very high quality samples of pupils' work in infant and junior classes are displayed. Pupils in all classes demonstrate good knowledge and understanding across a range of curricular areas. Pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning, they participate fully in lessons and complete assigned learning tasks in a purposeful and meaningful manner. *Léiríonn na daltaí dea-leibhéil inniúlachta sa Ghaeilge, i gcoitinne. Pupils display good levels of competence in Irish, in general.* School assessment data indicate high levels of pupil attainment in English reading and spelling, Mathematics and Irish.
- Many opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in a very broad co-curricular and extra-curricular programme. These include science, maths and arts education activities, local community and environment initiatives, school choir competitions and sports events. Pupils display very high standards in musical and choral performances. The investment of teacher time in these activities is highly commended. Findings from parental surveys indicate that almost all parents agree that their child is doing well in school. Responses from pupils' questionnaires indicated that most pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching observed during the evaluation ranged from satisfactory to excellent, with the majority of lessons in the good to very good range. Very good provision is made, overall, for a very broad and balanced education. In all settings, very positive pupil-teacher relationships are cultivated, favourable learning atmospheres are fostered and classroom tasks are managed effectively. In general, good lesson structure and clear communication skills are evident. There is a good balance between teacher-directed activity and the promotion of participative methodologies and collaborative tasks in almost all classes. Further attention should be given to differentiated instruction in mainstream classes.
- Aspects of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* are implemented at infant and junior class level to very good effect. Very effective integrated learning activities were observed and very good emphasis was placed on using different types of play to support children's learning across the curriculum.
- The physical environment of almost all classroom settings is very attractive, well organised and stimulating for learning and teaching. Pupils' samples of work across a range of curricular areas are displayed. The delivery of lessons is supported by the use of the school's information and communication technology (ICT) resources. Almost all parents expressed the view, in parent questionnaire responses, that teaching is good in the school.
- The overall quality of individual teacher planning is good with some excellent practice observed at some levels. All mainstream class teachers provide comprehensive planning documentation. Individual education plans (IEPs) and individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs), which support the priority learning needs of pupils, are very clearly detailed in most support settings. Very high quality written planning, in the form of short term preparation and progress reviews, is also provided. A more consistent approach to planning and document presentation across all support settings is recommended.
- The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics is of a high standard. Lessons are structured and developed effectively in almost all classes. Where good practice was observed, concrete materials were accessible and used productively in mathematics lessons; mathematical language was consolidated; Mathematics areas were created in the classroom environment; active learning strategies were promoted and the school's ICT resources were used effectively to support lesson presentation. The development and consolidation of pupils' mental mathematics skills should be ensured in all settings.

Accordingly, the use of strategies from the *Mata sa Rang* programme should be extended to all classes.

- The quality of teaching in English is good. The area of literacy has been identified as an area for improvement in the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process and it has received good attention in this regard. The aspect of writing is one of the main focuses in the school improvement plan (SIP). In classroom environments and in the public areas of the school, there is evidence that a range of writing genres is explored. Some very good scaffolds are displayed to assist pupils in their work and pupils' familiarity with various genres from the school's structured writing programme is also evident. In some classes, however, further development is required with regard to teacher modelling and the preparation of genres prior to the assignment of written tasks. The quality of pupils' writing in the infant and junior classes is particularly praiseworthy. Pupils' copies are monitored and, in some settings, the focus on presentation and cursive writing style has had a positive impact on written outcomes. In other settings, further attention needs to be given to the presentation of work.
- Due attention is paid to work in oral language at each class level. This work is developed mainly through talk and discussion. Pupils are articulate, in general, and express themselves with clarity and confidence. In infant classes, oral language activities linked with the themes and topics of *Aistear* are implemented to very good effect. Debates are used productively as an approach to develop oral confidence and self-expression at senior class level. While pupils' knowledge of poetry is developed productively in most classes, a broader range of poems in English should be explored and memorised at all class levels. In reading, lessons are based primarily on the class textbook. Shared reading activities are undertaken at infant class level and good emphasis is placed on phonological awareness, word identification and word exploration activities. The novel is explored in the middle and senior classes and pupils are encouraged to read a range of books from class libraries at all class levels. Pupils read fluently and with expression, in general. In some settings, reading skills and strategies are developed appropriately. More explicit instruction in the full range of reading skills should now be implemented systematically throughout all class levels. To extend pupils' engagement in reading, further attention should be given to differentiated instruction. The implementation of a differentiated reading programme in all class levels, through an extended and revised model of in-class support, should be considered.
- Ar an iomlán, tá dea-chaighdeán ag baint le teagasc na Gaeilge. Sna suímh ranga inar breathnaíodh dea-chleachtas, cuireadh béim ar Ghaeilge a úsáid mar mhionchaint agus mar mhéan teagaisc; ar ionchur cuí foclóra agus teanga nua a chinntiú; ar aithris filíochta agus ar scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt trí obair chomhoibritheach agus trí mhodhanna gníomhacha foghlama. Baineadh dea-fheidhm fresin as ábhair chorpártha, púipéid, cruthú suímh réalaíocha agus tascanna ról-ghlacaidh. Chun tógáil ar na tréithe dea-chleachtais, moltar na trí thréimhse cumarsáide a chur i bhfeidhm i ngach ceacht. Sna bunranganna, forbraítear scileanna litearthachta na ndaltaí go héifeachtach. Tríd na rangleibhéil go léir, léann daltaí na téacsanna ranga le tuiscint. Chun cur le líofacht léitheoireachta agus inniúlacht scríofa na ndaltaí, ba chóir féachaint le scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt go foirmiúil agus go córasach. Chuige sin, is fiú réimse níos leithne téacsanna léitheoireachta a sholáthar agus próiseas na scríbhneoireachta a leathnú.

The overall teaching of Irish is of a good standard. In classrooms settings where good practice was observed, emphasis was placed on using Irish incidentally and as the medium of instruction; on ensuring the input of new language and vocabulary; on the recitation of poetry and on developing pupils' communication skills through collaborative work and active learning methodologies. Good use was also made of concrete materials, puppets, the creation of authentic settings and role-play tasks. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that the three phases of communication be implemented in every lesson. In junior classes, pupils' literacy skills are developed effectively. Pupils read class texts with understanding throughout all class levels. To further enhance pupils' reading fluency and written competence, it should be ensured that reading and writing skills in Irish are developed formally and systematically. To this end, a wider range of reading material should be provided and the writing process should be expanded.

- Work undertaken in aspects of the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) curriculum is highly commended. This includes work in Science and History, where a broad and balanced programme is provided.
- A broad range of summative assessment practices is implemented. Standardised tests are administered and analysed. Assessment folders for individual pupils are maintained in most classes and pupils' written work is monitored and corrected. In some mainstream classes, it should be ensured that regular and effective feedback on pupils' work in copybooks is provided. The further development of formative assessment, pupil self-assessment and assessment for learning strategies at all class levels should also be ensured.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The school's commitment to developing and ensuring an inclusive learning environment is excellent. All staff members are strongly committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils. The management of pupils is very good throughout the school. All teachers agree, in teacher questionnaire surveys, that the behaviour of pupils is good and that all pupils are treated fairly and respectfully. The school's ancillary staff make a significant contribution to the work of the school. The special needs assistants (SNAs) work collaboratively with the teaching staff and are commended for the work they undertake.
- Overall, the quality of teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and special education needs ranges from good to very good. In some settings, the quality of provision is excellent. In these instances, target setting is very specific, the recording of progress made by the pupils is regularly documented and a broad range of focussed teaching strategies is implemented very effectively. IEPs and IPLPs are shared with class teachers/parents and review meetings are convened, as appropriate. This good practice is highly commended. A wide range of activities is undertaken skilfully, which is based on addressing and developing pupils' priority learning needs. In infant and junior classes, some in-class support activities are implemented. At present, a large number of pupils are withdrawn from mainstream class settings for learning support provision on an individual or group basis. The level of pupil withdrawal from mainstream classes for support teaching should be reduced and an extended and revised model of in-class support provision should be prioritised and implemented.
- Pupils were very positive in their responses to items in the pupil questionnaire. In this survey, almost all pupils indicate that they like school. Findings from parental surveys indicate that almost all parents are of the opinion that their child feels safe and well looked after in 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

- The school is managed very effectively by a dedicated and pro-active board of management. The board and parents are involved actively in supporting the work of the school and regular communication has been established between the principal, the chairperson, the school and the wider school community. The board meets frequently, minutes of board meetings are recorded clearly and school accounts are certified on an annual basis. The board indicated that it will provide an annual report to parents on the operation of the school at the end of this school-year. The board has overseen considerable development in the school building and pupil enrolment in recent years. The achievements and work of the board in ensuring that the internal and external school environments are well maintained and appropriately resourced, in improving the school accommodation and in extending the school building are highly commended. The board reports that it is very satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- The administrative principal and in-school management team exhibit strong and purposeful leadership skills. The principal assumed leadership of the school in March 2014. Since his appointment, he has continued to sustain a positive school climate and a strong spirit of collaboration among teachers. He promotes a culture of distributed

leadership and works conscientiously to ensure that the school operates efficiently. The deputy principal works in very effective collaboration with the principal. She demonstrates strong instructional leadership skills, an on-going and high level of commitment to the school and a clear knowledge of the school community. All members of the in-school management team display great commitment to fulfilling a wide range of responsibilities and they are very supportive of the leadership of the school. Parents were very positive in their responses to items in parental surveys. This indicates that the vast majority of parents are very happy with the overall quality of provision in the school. Almost all parents expressed the view that the school is well run.

- A clear and comprehensive three-year school development plan has been formulated. This document details aspects of work completed to date and also identifies current and future priorities for development, with regard to school practices, policies and planning documentation. Organisational policies are formulated comprehensively. A staff teaching rotation policy should be now formulated and implemented, so that all teachers have the opportunity to experience a variety of classes and contexts and to share expertise at different class levels and settings throughout the school.
- The school is characterised by a sense of community and inclusiveness. The parents' association, parent body and local community are very supportive of the work of the school. The parents' association engages in a range of activities and is commended for its work on behalf of the school. Parent questionnaires indicate that almost all parents feel welcome in the school. Parents are kept informed of the school's work through monthly newsletters. Written reports on pupil progress are issued to parents and parent-teacher meetings are convened on an annual basis. The school website is updated regularly. These good practices are commended.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school's engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very good. Clear SSE reports and SIPs have been formulated. Priorities for school improvement have been identified in literacy and numeracy and a significant amount of work has been undertaken with regard to gathering evidence in these areas. Teachers have begun to implement strategies towards changing classroom practice and improving learner outcomes in aspects of literacy, including the development of English writing genres, pupils' spelling and dictation skills.
- The implementation of the SIP in literacy is being very carefully monitored. Very good work has been undertaken in reviewing the impact of the school's structured approach to English writing, through the compilation of teachers' responses, school-generated pupil questionnaires and work samples. Further development and refinement of the targets detailed in the school's SIP, to ensure that they are explicitly time bound and that they are expressed in terms of measurable and specific learning outcomes for pupils, would further enhance the school's self-evaluation process.

Conclusion

- The school's capacity to engage in school improvement is very good.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management accepts the content of the report which has highlighted much strength in our 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.

We will continue to build on these strengths and incorporate the recommendations into the School Development Plan.