

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

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

**Oola National School
Oola, Co. Limerick
Uimhir rolla: 17184H**

Date of inspection: 14 January 2016



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Oola National School in January 2016. 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 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.

Oola National School is a co-educational primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. It is situated in Oola, Co. Limerick, approximately six miles from Tipperary town. The school has four mainstream class teachers, including a teaching principal, and three support teachers, one of whom is shared with another school. There were ninety-two pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation. School attendance levels are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- The teaching principal leads and manages the organisational structures in the school very effectively.
- Teachers are very conscientious and hardworking and have adopted a range of curricular initiatives.
- The overall quality of teaching in the school ranges from good to very good.
- Staff members are committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils.
- Pupils display very good levels of behaviour and engagement.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements is good.
- The board of management has provided effective, professional and committed management to the school.
- The ancillary staff gives very valuable and dedicated support to the school.
- The parents are very supportive of the school's work and a sense of community underpins school life.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- The school's engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To build on the good work which has been established regarding literacy interventions in the infant and junior classes, differentiated reading texts should be provided at middle and senior class level and in-class support initiatives in literacy should be introduced.
- A review of how Mathematics teaching is provided for composite class groups should be undertaken. The practice of withdrawing whole classes for lessons in Mathematics should be reviewed, to bring school policy in line with the terms of Circular Letter 02/05.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements is good. Evidence available in the school and obtained during the evaluation indicates that pupils are making good progress in their learning in English reading and Mathematics. Ar an iomlán, léiríonn na daltaí dea-leibhéal tuisceana agus inniúlacht oiriúnach labhartha sa Ghaeilge. *Overall, pupils display good levels of understanding and suitable spoken competence in Irish.*
- Pupils' progress is assessed annually in literacy and numeracy. Summative assessment data are analysed carefully and individual pupil progress is tracked.
- Pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning and they engage fully in lessons. They participate in a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including musical performances, local environment initiatives and sports events. Findings from parental surveys indicate that almost all parents agree that their child is doing well in school. Responses from pupils' questionnaires indicated that almost all pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school ranges from good to very good. Teachers are very conscientious and hardworking and have adopted a range of curricular initiatives. A station teaching model of support in literacy is implemented in infant and junior classes. In all settings, teaching and learning tasks are managed effectively. Lesson presentation is supported by the productive use of the school's information and communications technology (ICT) resources.
- In general, good lesson structure and clear communication skills are evident. There is a good balance between teacher-directed activity and the promotion of active learning and collaborative tasks. There is scope, however, to develop these features of practice. In this regard, the majority of pupils expressed disagreement or uncertainty, in pupil questionnaire responses, regarding the opportunities given to work in groups during some lessons.
- Aspects of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* are implemented at infant level to very good effect. Integrated learning activities are planned carefully and very good emphasis is placed on using different types of play to support children's learning.
- The physical environment of all settings is organised very attractively for learning and teaching. Pupils' samples of work across a range of curricular areas are displayed in classrooms and in the school's public areas.
- All parents expressed the view, in parent questionnaire responses, that teaching is good in the school.
- The overall quality of individual teacher planning is very good. All mainstream and support class teachers provide comprehensive planning documentation. Individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) are clearly detailed in support settings.
- The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics ranges from good to very good. In all lessons observed, concrete materials were used productively, active learning was promoted, mathematical language was consolidated and problem-solving strategies were taught. Where very good practice was observed, teaching content was differentiated and effective support was provided commensurate with individual pupil need. A review of how Mathematics teaching is provided for composite class groups should now be undertaken. The practice of withdrawing whole classes for lessons in Mathematics should be reviewed, to bring school policy in line with the terms of Circular Letter 02/05. Whole-school strategies to introduce in-class support and differentiated teaching in Mathematics should be considered.
- The overall quality of teaching in the English lessons observed is good. At infant class level, oral language activities are linked very skilfully with the themes of the *Aistear*

framework. In-class support is provided in infant and junior classes. Differentiated reading texts have been purchased and the *Literacy Lift-Off* intervention has been established and implemented successfully. Strategies from the *Building Bridges* programme are implemented throughout the school to develop pupils' comprehension skills. In the middle and senior classes, graded readers are used and the novel is explored. To build on the good work which has been established through the *Literacy Lift-Off* intervention in infant and junior classes, an extended and revised model of in-class support in English should now be prioritised at middle and senior class level, through the use of differentiated texts and small group literacy instruction. There is evidence that writing genres are taught and developed and that a broad range of poems in English is memorised by pupils.

- Tá caighdeán cuí ag baint le teagasc na Gaeilge, ar an iomlán, agus i ranganna áirithe breathnaíodh gnéithe de straitéisí éifeachtacha múinte. Úsáideadh an Ghaeilge mar mheán teagaisc agus cuireadh béim oiriúnach ar ionchur foclóra agus ar ghnéithe na gramadaí a léiriú. Múintear cnuasach leathan filíochta agus tá raon maith dánta ar eolas ag na daltaí. Moltar, anois, na tréimhsí cumarsáide a chinntiú sna ceachtanna agus deiseanna rialta a thabhairt do na daltaí an teanga atá foghlamtha acu a chleachtadh. Ba chóir difreáil in ábhar na gceachtanna a chinntiú i ranganna áirithe.

The quality of teaching in Irish is of an appropriate standard, overall, and in some classes very effective teaching strategies were observed. Irish was used as the medium of instruction and suitable emphasis was placed on vocabulary input and on the presentation of grammatical aspects. A broad anthology of poetry is taught and a good range of poems is known by the pupils. It is recommended that the phases of communication be implemented in lessons and that frequent opportunities be given to pupils to practise the language they have acquired. Differentiating the content of lessons should also be undertaken in some classes.

- A very broad range of assessment practices is implemented. A thorough analysis of standardised tests results is undertaken, which includes the evaluation of whole class performance and the tracking of individual pupil progress. This good practice is highly commended.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- The management of pupils is very good and pupils display very good levels of behaviour and engagement. Positive learning atmospheres and teacher-pupil interactions are cultivated in all settings. The principal and teaching staff demonstrate a clear knowledge of the pupils in their care. In questionnaire responses, all pupils agreed that they like school and almost all pupils stated that they feel safe in the class. The ancillary staff, including the school secretary and the special needs assistants (SNAs), give very valuable and dedicated support to the school. In parental surveys, almost all parents indicated that their child feels safe and well looked after in the school.
- The quality of teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and special education needs is very good. In support settings, a broad range of learning activities is provided, target setting is specific and reviews of IPLPs are undertaken. Pupils are withdrawn from mainstream class settings on an individual or group basis. In-class activities are also implemented. A review of the current model of withdrawal and an extension of the current model of in-class support should now be considered.
- 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 has provided effective, professional and committed management to the school. The achievements of the outgoing board in supporting the work of the school is highly commended. A *Strategic Plan Framework* has been formulated which provides good guidance to the incoming board with regard to

organisational, curricular and resource aspects of school provision. Minutes of board meetings are recorded clearly and school accounts are certified on an annual basis. In parental surveys, most parents state that the board reports annually to parents on the work of the school. Very good work has been undertaken with regard to the development, ongoing review and ratification of school planning documentation. Good communication systems have been established between the chairperson and school personnel.

- The teaching principal leads and manages the organisational structures in the school very effectively and he displays strong leadership to the whole-school community. All parents expressed the view, in parent questionnaire responses, that the school is well run. Teachers with special duties posts undertake a broad range of tasks. All teachers have contributed to leading initiatives in the school.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's work and a sense of community underpins school life. Analysis of parental surveys indicates that almost all parents are happy with the overall quality of the school's provision. Very good systems of communication between home and school have been established and the school website is updated regularly. Discussions with parents' representatives indicate that parents have very positive perspectives on the work of the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school's engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very good. In this regard, a significant amount of work has been undertaken and implemented during the past three school years. Clear SSE reports and school improvement plans (SIPs) have been formulated. Oral language development in English, problem solving in Mathematics and the examination of aspects of Science provision constitute the main focus of the school's current work in the SSE 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M. of Oola N.S. greatly appreciates the very positive affirmation in the WSE-MLL Report.

Pupils, staff and the school community feel that it is a true reflection of the commitment and dedication of the very conscientious and hardworking staff. The report also highlights the work ethic, the collaborative spirit and the caring environment in our school. The Board is particularly proud of the very good levels of behaviour and engagement of the pupils as noted by the Inspectorate.

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 B.O.M. is fully committed to extending the Literacy Lift Off Programme to the senior end of the school. It has reviewed Maths provision in the school and will concentrate on more in-class support and team teaching for the new term.