

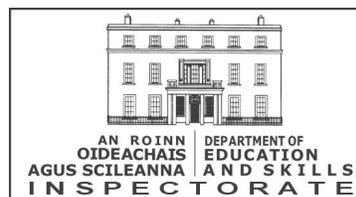
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Scoil Náisiúnta Ard Mhuire Cailíní**  
**Ballsgrrove, Drogheda, County Louth**  
**Uimhir rolla: 19215C**

**Date of inspection: 5 November 2015**



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

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Náisiúnta Ard Mhuire, Cailíní, in November 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 and with board and parent representatives, completed parent, pupil and teacher 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Scoil Ard Mhuire is an all-girls' primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme and receives support from the School Completion Programme. There are currently 294 girls enrolled across fifteen mainstream classes. The school has a team of five full-time and two part-time support personnel including two teachers for English as an additional language (EAL). Attendance rates are very good.

The evaluation has found:

- Pupils experience a wide range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Overall the learning achievements of pupils are good with scope to develop their learning in Irish.
- Overall teaching is of a high standard and teaching of numeracy is very good. The focus of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) should be reviewed.
- The quality of classroom planning is good overall. Whole-school planning and provision for Physical Education (PE) should be reviewed.
- Pastoral care provision in the school is of a high quality and communication between home and school is very good.
- The board of management is dedicated to ensuring that the school delivers a high-quality education for pupils. The principal provides very effective leadership in a spirit of collegiality.
- The school's level of engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) is of a very high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Ní mór úsáid a bhaint as fíor leabhair sa léitheoireacht Ghaeilge agus níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na páistí scríobh go neamhspleách. *In Irish, pupils should read real books and have more opportunities to write independently.*
- The focus of provision for SEN and EAL should be reviewed to ensure a greater balance of models and differentiated instruction for all pupils. In addition, development of a programme and policy for EAL provision should be prioritised.
- Teachers should deliver a broad and balanced learning programme for PE across the school year.

## Findings

### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils are good. They experience a wide range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation, almost all pupils agreed they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in literacy is good. Pupils engage enthusiastically in discrete speaking and listening activities. They demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of writing genres and reading strategies. Individual reading attainment could be further developed through a more differentiated reading programme in senior classes.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in numeracy is very good. At infant level, pupils engage in rich and varied mathematical learning activities. In some mainstream classrooms, in-class station teaching enables effective differentiated mathematical learning. Opportunities for pupils to engage in similar learning experiences in the senior classes should be provided.
- Tá cailíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus tá a gcuid Gaeilge labhartha go maith. Léann siad go hábailta ón téacsleabhair. Moltar úsáid a bhaint as fíor leabhair chun spéis agus taitneamh sa léitheoireacht a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Moltar níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na páistí scríobh go neamhspleách. (*The quality of pupils' learning in Irish is good. Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to learning Irish and their use of oral Irish is good. They are able to read capably from the textbook. It is recommended that more use be made of real books to further develop interest and enjoyment in reading. Pupils should be afforded more opportunities to engage in independent writing.*)

### 2. Quality of teaching

- Overall teaching is of a high standard throughout the school and there is a strong commitment to continuous professional development amongst the staff. Whole-school approaches to the explicit teaching of oral language and reading skills, writing genres and maths recovery strategies are evident in all learning settings. Teachers are actively developing approaches to support play-based learning in infant settings.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with SEN is good. Teachers engage in both in-class and withdrawal models of provision. The very good provision of station-teaching for numeracy and literacy incorporating planning, assessment and monitoring of progress should be extended to all in-class models. The focus of provision for SEN should be reviewed to ensure a greater balance of withdrawal and in-class models to support differentiated instruction for all pupils. Parents of pupils with SEN should be provided with a copy of their child's individual education plan.
- Overall, the quality of teaching provided for pupils with EAL is good. The identification of target language in all lessons would enhance the quality of this provision. Diagnostic tests are used appropriately to identify pupils' learning needs. The recording of pupils' progress and of planned provision is advised. In light of the allocation of two EAL teaching posts to the school, the development of a programme and policy on EAL provision should be prioritised.
- Overall, the quality of classroom planning is good. While short-term planning was found to be very good, the quality of teachers' long-term planning varied considerably. All plans should be contextuallised to include whole-school approaches to teaching methodologies, assessment and differentiation. Whole-school planning and provision for PE should be reviewed. Teachers should deliver a suitably broad and balanced learning programme of PE for all pupils.

- Assessment of learning practices, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are well developed in the school. The implementation of aspects of *assessment for learning* (AfL) in some classrooms is commended. Further opportunities for pupils to peer and self-assess should be provided.

### **3. Support for pupils' well-being**

- Pastoral care provision is of a high quality. The school provides a positive inclusive culture that supports all pupils effectively. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, show that only half of the pupils indicated that they have a say in how things are done in the school. The introduction of formal assemblies as well as a student council would facilitate and promote pupils' voice within the school.
- Communication between home and school is very good. Parents regularly support pupils' learning in school and, in many instances, contribute to the richness of these experiences. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate that almost all parents are happy with the school. The school benefits from the support of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) coordinator. A broad range of strategies and programmes is implemented very successfully to promote parental involvement in the life 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**

- The board of management is dedicated to ensuring that the school delivers a high-quality education for pupils. The school is very well resourced and well maintained. Commendably, the board issues an annual report to parents on the operation of the school. The board has a strategic plan for the future physical development of the school. In the interim, consideration should be given to the on-going development of the schools' indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- The principal provides very effective leadership in a spirit of collegiality. Notably, in responses to questionnaires, all teachers indicated that the school is well run. The deputy principal effectively supports the work of the principal. The in-school management (ISM) team has a range of roles across curricular, pastoral and administrative domains. Collectively, their work contributes to the efficient running of the school. An annual review of the ISM roles is highly commended and should enable the more effective co-ordination of SEN and EAL provision in the school.

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

- The quality of school self-evaluation is very high. A school self-evaluation report and school improvement plan for literacy and numeracy have been devised. A summary school improvement report has been communicated to parents. The school is engaged currently in the review of Irish and the same rigorous approach to improvement is advised.

## **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to develop further is very good. The school community have demonstrated an on-going commitment to improvement in the school.

## **Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management welcomes the report of the whole-school evaluation conducted by the Inspectorate. We are pleased that the Inspectorate noted the high standard of teaching and learning, the positive inclusive culture and the high quality of pastoral care in Marymount School. The very successful parental involvement will continue to be encouraged. The report acknowledges the very good capacity of the school to develop further. The Board of Management is committed to the enhancement of the existing culture of continuous improvement, the hallmark of an effective school.

Since the completion of the report, the new school building has been approved. This will further develop the educational provision in Marymount School.

### **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

Addressing the recommendations:

1. Gaeilge: Cuirfear leabharlann fíor leabhair ar fáil sa scoil i mbliana agus cuirfear deiseanna ar fáil do na paistí scríobh go neamhspleách sa rang.
2. In relation to provision for SEN and EAL, a plan is being drawn up to address issues raised. It will be implemented systematically. A review of EAL provision and policy development will commence in January 2016. The Learning Support Team will introduce a wider variety of support models at Senior Level from February 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, on a phased basis.
3. The provision of a broad and balanced programme for PE will be addressed in the medium term, with a view to full implementation in the 2016/17 School Year.