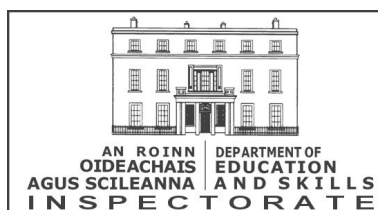


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Bennekerry NS,  
Bennekerry, Co. Carlow  
Uimhir rolla: 17501Q**

**Date of inspection: 3 December 2014**



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

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Bennekerry NS in December 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Bennekerry NS, is a co-educational vertical primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The overall attendance levels of the 431 pupils enrolled are very good.

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

- High quality leadership and management is evident at all levels in the school.
- The overall learning achievements of pupils are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is of a high standard, with some exemplary practices and staff demonstrate professionalism and a shared sense of purpose.
- Support for pupil well-being is very good and mutually respectful relationships are successfully created.
- The principal provides effective leadership and is supported by a reflective and capable in-school management team.
- The board of management operates efficiently and is focused on the provision of high quality learning experiences for pupils.
- There is a warm school atmosphere and the parents' association and parent body provide commendable support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Ar mhaithe le gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a uasmhéadú, moltar a muinín agus a scileanna foghlama neamhspleácha sa teanga a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. *To enhance the pupils' achievement levels in Irish, further development of their confidence and independent-learning skills is recommended.*
- Whole-school literacy and numeracy initiatives should be embedded in practice across the school. Specific learning benchmarks, that facilitate the sharing of expectations, should be developed to support a more cohesive, incremental approach to pupil learning.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of pupils, including pupils with additional and special educational needs, are very good and pupils experience a comprehensive range of learning experiences.
- Pupil achievement in English is of a high standard overall. Many pupils demonstrate good and very good reading standards and in their questionnaire responses most pupils expressed the view that they are doing well at reading. Pupils display good oral language skills and communicate confidently and articulately. Some very good examples of pupils' writing are in evidence in response to a whole-school promotion of writing genres. The structured promotion of the writing process is commended and should be embedded in all learning settings.

- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán maith le sonrú i bhfoghlaím na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. Ar mhaithe lena ngnóthachtáil a uasmhéadú, moltar a muintín agus a scileanna foghlama neamhspleácha sa teanga a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. *Overall, a good standard of pupil learning in Irish is evident. To enhance their achievement levels, further development of their confidence and independent-learning skills is recommended.*
- The overall learning achievement of pupils in Mathematics is very good. The pupils use mathematical language and concrete resources with competence and engage in problem-solving activities with enthusiasm. In line with the school's improvement plan, the further development of mental Mathematics and active problem-solving approaches will support ongoing improvement in these areas. In their questionnaire responses, most pupils indicate that they are doing well at Maths.
- In arts education, commendable examples of pupils' creativity in a range of media are attractively displayed. In Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), pupils discuss and debate topics covered with enthusiasm and high levels of understanding and knowledge are displayed. The standard of pupils' singing is praiseworthy.

## 2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching is of a high standard, with some exemplary practices. Features of best practice include: clear communication of the lesson purpose; a strong focus on the development of specific skills; effective tracking of learning for the varying abilities of pupils; and the provision of meaningful opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. There were some worthwhile examples of the integrated use of information and communication technology (ICT) in pupil learning. In light of the number of pupils who, in their questionnaire responses, indicate that they do not use computers during some lessons, a whole-school examination of how ICT is integrated into learning is advised.
- Provision of support for pupils with additional and special educational needs is commendable, with some excellent practice. Lessons are well planned and implemented and support is provided through a combination of withdrawal and in-class support. To build on this good practice, it is advised that learning targets should be consistently specific and that approaches used to track the progress of pupils during in-class interventions should be extended. The school's focus on early intervention and prevention is highly praised.
- Particularly laudable structured team-teaching interventions in literacy and numeracy are impacting positively on pupil learning. Good examples of the teaching of discrete oral language were noted and some commendable approaches to the teaching of reading skills. To further develop pupils' learning experience in reading, these approaches to the teaching of reading skills should be embedded in all classes. This should include: an increased emphasis on the promotion of personal reading in all settings, more in-depth use of the novel, and an incremental approach to the implementation of the breadth of approaches to reading. Consideration should also be given to the formal introduction of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Tá múineadh na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán maith ar an iomlán, le roinnt samplaí de dhea-chleachtas. Chun cabhrú le saibhreas teanga na ndaltaí, moltar na scileanna teanga a chomhtháthú ar bhealach níos nádúrtha agus deiseanna níos rialta a thabhairt dóibh an Ghaeilge atá acu a úsáid go neamhspleách. *The teaching of Irish is good overall, with samples of excellent practice. To assist language acquisition, a more natural linkage of language skills is recommended and the provision of more regular opportunities for pupils' independent use of the language.*

- A broad range of assessment of and for learning approaches is in use across the school. Some excellent examples of assessment for learning, involving the purposeful use of assessment information to guide differentiated programmes of learning for individuals and groups of pupils, were observed. The dissemination of this best practice and the extension of pupil self-assessment approaches are advised.
- In SESE, SPHE and arts education, lessons are integrated effectively across the curriculum. Physical education lessons are well structured and implemented.

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

- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. A warm and welcoming school atmosphere and a palpable sense of community were strongly in evidence.
- During the evaluation, pupil behaviour was highly commendable and the interactions between pupils and staff and pupils and their peers were positive and respectful. In questionnaires, almost all pupils agreed that they feel safe in their classrooms and that they like school.
- Pupils have been involved in some decision-making in the school through the recent art commission project and through surveys as part of the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process. So that pupils are more regularly involved in decision-making that affects them, it is recommended that a student council be established.
- 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**

- High quality leadership and management is evident at all levels in the school.
- The board of management operates efficiently and is clearly focused on the provision of a high quality learning experiences for pupils. The board has overseen the school's recent expansion and building project and is regularly updated on the learning progress of the pupils. The board should now consider the publication of an annual report on its operation.
- The principal provides effective leadership to the school community and ensures that the school is well managed. She fosters a strong spirit of collaboration amongst the teachers, encourages innovation and promotes continuing professional development. She is supported by a reflective in-school management team who contribute in a meaningful way to the on-going developments in the school. Individual members lead the implementation of a variety of curricular initiatives. There is a shared sense of purpose amongst the wider staff who are committed to striving for excellence in teaching and learning.
- Given the growth of the school over the past number of years, a particular challenge for the leadership is that of ensuring a cohesive approach to curricular implementation. Whole-school literacy and numeracy initiatives should be embedded in practice across the school. Specific learning benchmarks, that facilitate the sharing of expectations, should be developed to support a more cohesive, incremental approach to pupil learning.
- The results of questionnaires indicate that parents are supportive of, and satisfied with, the work of the school. The parents' association actively contributes to school life. Positive channels of communication have been developed and parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning through parent information evenings and policy development activities. To enhance the role of parents in school

life, additional opportunities for their more direct involvement in in-school activities ways should be considered.

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

- Very good work has been undertaken to date in SSE and it is evident that initiatives are impacting positively on provision for pupils. To optimise the impact of the SSE process, the identification of more specific, measurable targets and a mechanism to evaluate the impact of initiatives on pupil learning is advised.

#### **Conclusion**

- Given the commitment of the school community to striving for the highest standards in teaching and learning, and the progress made to date on the recommendations provided following the most recent incidental inspection, the school's capacity to develop further 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 of Bennekerry National School welcomes the many positive findings outlined in our school's WSE-MLL report. We are particularly pleased with the affirming comments regarding the very good learning achievements of our pupils in all areas of the curriculum, the high standard of teaching throughout the school with some exemplary practices noted, the commendable support provided for children with special education needs, the effective team-teaching interventions which we have introduced in literacy and numeracy and the high quality of leadership and management which were found evident in the school.

The Board is delighted with the observations made with regard to the pupils' good behaviour, the positive and respectful relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils and their peers, the warm, welcoming school atmosphere and our tangible sense of community. Furthermore, the Board is very pleased that the support and involvement of parents in their children's learning and the positive contribution made by the Parents' Association were acknowledged and highly commended.

## **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 welcome the recommendations contained in this report and look forward to implementing each of them in due course. Our first priority will be to embed the team teaching interventions in literacy and numeracy which have proved very successful to date and to extend these to all classes.

*Ina theannta sin, ta sé beartaithe againn tuilleadh straitéisí agus acmhainní a iniúchadh chun na scileanna teanga sa Ghaeilge a chomhthathú níos éifeachtaí agus deiseanna níos minicí a thabhairt do na daltaí caint as a stuaim féin.*