

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

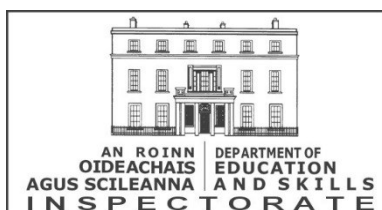
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Harold's Cross National School
Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W
Uimhir rolla: 19924i**

Date of inspection: 25 January 2016



Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Harold's Cross National School in January 2016. This report is based on the 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, a number of teachers and special needs assistants, meetings with board and parent representatives, 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.

Harold's Cross National School caters for boys and girls from junior infants to sixth class and is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Its school population has grown significantly in recent years and there are currently 321 pupils on roll.

Main findings

The evaluation has found:

- The learning achievements of pupils in many aspects of the curriculum are of a very high quality.
- The overall quality of teaching in this school is very good.
- The teaching of Irish needs to be improved. *Tá gá le caighdeán na Gaeilge a fheabhsú.*
- Implementation of a spiral musical literacy programme is advised.
- The principal provides excellent leadership for learning.
- The board of management is highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The school's self-evaluation processes (including its DEIS planning processes) are of a very high quality and are impacting positively on standards in English literacy, numeracy and Science.
- The teachers demonstrate outstanding commitment to the consistent implementation of actions in the school improvement plan. There is a strong sense of corporate professionalism among the staff of this school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is advised that the teaching of Irish be developed to include the promotion of a positive disposition towards the language, greater emphasis on the communicative approach to teaching Irish and the active engagement of pupils in learning Irish.
Tá gá le caighdeán na Gaeilge a fheabhsú. Mar chuid den phróiseas sin, moltar dearcadh dearfach a chothú i leith na teanga chomh maith le tuilleadh béime ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach i dteagasc na Gaeilge agus ar rannpháirtíocht ghníomhach na ndaltaí i bhfoghlaím na teanga.
- It is advised that pupils' learning in Music be broadened through a spiral musical literacy programme and extension of the pupils' repertoire of songs (to include a range of age-appropriate Irish language songs).

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The learning achievements of pupils in many aspects of the curriculum are of a very high quality. Pupils with special educational needs are progressing well in their learning as are pupils for whom English is an additional language. During the evaluation, pupils at all class levels presented as motivated and enthusiastic learners. They demonstrated high levels of engagement in the learning activities observed, and an ability to reflect on how their learning was progressing. Almost all pupils surveyed through questionnaires indicated that they liked the school and enjoyed their lessons and learning. Similarly, almost all parent respondents indicated that their child enjoyed school.
- Overall learning achievements in English literacy are very good. The pupils are confident readers and analysis of assessment information, including the work of tracker pupils, shows an ongoing, significant improvement in literacy standards over recent years. Pupils' writing skills across a range of genres are developing very well. Classroom displays and pupils' written work indicate the very good breadth and quality of the pupils' writing experiences. The pupils are benefitting from the range of initiatives implemented in the school to support literacy learning including the Literacy Power Hour, Reading Recovery and, more recently, Building Bridges of Understanding.
- The learning of pupils in Irish is fair. The principal and teachers, through the school self-evaluation process, have correctly identified a need to improve the learning of Irish in the school.
Tá caighdeán foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge measartha. Tá sé aimsithe i gceart ag an bpríomhoide agus ag na hoidí trí phróiseas na féinmheastóireachta scoile go bhfuil gá le caighdeán na Gaeilge sa scoil a fheabhsú.
- The pupils have a very positive attitude towards Mathematics and their overall learning in the subject is of a high standard, with attainments in the number strand of the curriculum being particularly good. Several examples of pupils collaborating effectively and confidently on practical problem-solving activities were observed. Many pupils demonstrate a very good ability to reason mathematically and to explain the processes involved in solving mathematical problems. School self-evaluation documentation and records of pupils' achievements in mathematics point to steady and sustained improvement in the mathematical competence of pupils in recent years. Pupils' learning in Mathematics is well supported through the school's implementation of a Numeracy Power Hour. Pupils with very good abilities in Mathematics would benefit from differentiated in-class provision underpinned by specific, progressive learning objectives in order to facilitate ongoing, incremental development of their mathematics skills. The school's current use of banding in the delivery of Mathematics needs to be monitored closely (particularly with regard to pupil perceptions and expectations) so that an informed decision on its future use can be made.
- Many fine examples of the pupils' work in the Visual Arts across a range of strands are on display in the school. The pupils' music experiences are enriched by activities such as Music in the Classroom, song-writing workshops, celebrations of the music of other countries and the availability of after-school ukulele and piano lessons. It is advised that pupils' learning in Music be consolidated through a spiral musical literacy programme and extension of the pupils' repertoire of songs (to include a range of age-appropriate Irish language songs).
- Pupils experience a rich curriculum in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education with a commendable science programme that develops scientific skills in a hands-on, practical way. Pupils' learning in Science is further enriched through an after-school science club.

2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in this school is very good. Teachers in all learning settings in the school – mainstream, special education and EAL - have positive expectations of the pupils and they acknowledge and affirm their efforts and achievements.

- Priority areas in the school improvement plan are reflected in the teachers' individual planning and in the focus of the lessons and interventions in classrooms. The agreed and shared approach to the teaching of English literacy, numeracy and Science is impacting very positively on learning outcomes in these areas. Well-structured lessons, station teaching, active participation of pupils in hands-on learning activities, the provision of individualised support for pupils, effective use of assessment for learning approaches, and collaboration among the teachers in curriculum planning and delivery, are among the strengths in teaching in this school.
- The teaching provided by the special educational needs team and EAL teacher is exemplary. Skilful delivery of a range of appropriate and well-planned initiatives to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs is evident. Support teachers make very good use of assessment information to plan suitable programmes of work and they track the progress of the pupils receiving additional supports very closely. The blend of in-class support and withdrawal of small groups and individual pupils is very effective. The focus on early intervention is commended.
- To achieve the required improvements in pupils' learning in Irish, it is advised that the school approach to the teaching of Irish be developed to include:
 - the promotion of a positive disposition towards the Irish language as well as an awareness of the culture associated with the language
 - whole-school clarity regarding the intended learning outcomes for oral language, reading and writing at each class level
 - greater emphasis on the communicative approach to teaching Irish
 - the facilitation of the active involvement of pupils in enjoyable, interactive and purposeful communication through Irish as often as possible during Irish lessons
 - teacher modelling of a good standard of Irish and avoidance of translation of Irish to English during the lessons
 - a whole-school approach to the use of Irish incidentally through the school day.

Chun feabhas a chinntiú ó thaobh fhoghlaim na ndaltaí de, moltar go mbeadh cur chuige aontaithe ar bhonn scoile uile i leith theagasc na teanga Gaeilge agus na gnéithe seo a leanas a bheith mar chuid den gcur chuige sin:

- *Dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga Gaeilge a chothú agus feasacht an chultúir Ghaeilge freisin*
 - *Soiléireacht a bheith ann maidir le cuspóirí foghlama don teanga ó bhéal, don léitheoireacht agus don scríbhneoireacht ag leibhéal gach uile ranga*
 - *Béim níos mó a chur ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach i dteagasc na Gaeilge*
 - *Rannpháirtíocht ghníomhach na ndaltaí a chothú trí ghníomhaíochtaí cumarsáideacha a mbeadh taitneamhach, idirghníomhach agus cuspóirí cinnte mar bhonn acu agus iad a úsáid chomh minic agus is féidir le linn na gceachtanna Gaeilge*
 - *Caighdeán maith Gaeilge á léiriú ag na hoidí féin le linn na gceachtanna Gaeilge agus modh an aistriúcháin ó Ghaeilge go Béarla a sheachaint*
 - *Cur chuige ar bhonn scoile uile a bheith ann maidir le húsáid na Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúla i rith an lae.*
- Good work is underway to incorporate the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* into the learning of pupils in the junior and senior infant classes.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- All pupils, regardless of religious belief, circumstances or background are welcomed and supported in the school. Pupils' transition into junior infants from pre-school is managed in a way that allows for early identification of individual pupils' needs and the planning for additional supports and interventions.

- Pupils are managed very well in the school and classroom interactions during the evaluation were observed to be respectful and fair. The school's special needs assistants play a vital role in helping pupils to participate fully in the life of the school. Pupils benefit from participation in a range of activities organised by the principal through the School Completion Programme and by the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator. A number of staff members form part of a care team that monitors and supports pupils with particular behaviour needs. The teachers and principal hold regular briefing and consultation meetings with parents and detailed feedback is provided to parents on the progress of their child. Almost all of the parents surveyed agreed that their child feels safe and well looked after in school. This was similarly reflected in the responses of the pupils surveyed.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and 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 supportive of the work of the school and displays an exemplary level of engagement in planning processes to support teaching and learning in the school. It meets regularly and works collaboratively with the principal. Accounts are audited annually in accordance with regulatory requirements. The school's attempts to establish a parents' association are noted and the board is encouraged to continue its efforts in this regard.
- The principal provides excellent leadership for learning. She is committed to an ongoing process of reflection and review with the objective of ensuring that high standards in teaching and learning are achieved and maintained in all learning settings in the school. In leading innovation and change in the school, the principal engages in relevant continuing professional development and participates in the delivery of interventions in classrooms. She also promotes and supports the continuing professional development of the staff. All teacher respondents to the questionnaires agreed that they are encouraged to avail of professional development opportunities and that new teachers are well supported when they start to work in the school. Similarly, the teacher respondents unanimously agreed that the school is well run. The principal's focus on the implementation of curriculum innovations and interventions in classrooms contributes significantly to the ongoing improvements in pupils' learning in the school.
- The in-school management team, which has been reduced considerably in size in recent years, contributes very effectively to the management of the school. Other teachers who are not appointed members of the in-school management team contribute in a significant way to school management functions.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school's self-evaluation processes (including its DEIS planning processes) are of a very high quality and are impacting positively on standards in English literacy, numeracy and Science. Excellent use is made of a wide range of data before and after interventions are introduced to assess their impact on pupils' learning. This data includes assessment information, surveys of parents and pupils, and feedback from teachers.
- The school's record-keeping and analysis of learning outcomes and progress at whole-school level, class level and individual pupil level are highly commended. The teachers demonstrate outstanding commitment to the consistent implementation of actions in

the school improvement plan. There is a strong sense of corporate professionalism among the staff of this school.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to engage in ongoing school improvement is excellent.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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 subject of Irish has been identified as our next subject for School Self- Evaluation and it is the intention of the staff to take on board all of the recommendations made by the inspectors going forward.