

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Enable Ireland Sandymount School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Sandymount Avenue Dublin 4 |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 18370J |

Date of Evaluation: 16-05-2017



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils' wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area. 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.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

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| Dates of inspection | 16-05-2017 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal and deputy principal• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to teachers, in-school management team, and board of management representatives |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Enable Ireland School, Sandymount, caters for children and young people from four to eighteen years with physical disability and related complex needs. The school is located on a purpose-built campus adjacent to Enable Ireland clinical services. The school has good facilities and play areas and the pupils have access to the therapy services and swimming pool on the campus. The services on campus include physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, psychology, medical and nursing. Enrolment at the time of this evaluation was forty-four pupils. The school catchment area extends across the south of Dublin City and County and the pupils avail of the Department of Education and Skills' school transport service. The attendance of pupils with increasingly complex special educational needs is a feature of changing enrolment. Staffing includes the principal, eight class teachers and twenty special-needs assistants (SNAs). The school patron is Enable Ireland.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Within an attractive and welcoming school environment, a high quality of care and support is provided to pupils throughout the school day.
- Teaching of a high quality is in evidence across the school and there is a commendable emphasis on the promotion of language and communication and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and assistive technology (AT) in classrooms.
- Commendable pupil learning is in evidence in classrooms; however opportunities for the certification of pupils' work, through for example the various levels of the Junior Certificate, which, while prioritised for introduction in the 2017-18 school year, were not in place at the time of this evaluation.
- The principal has promoted positive relationships among the teachers, SNAs and other professionals who work on the campus; there is a very good level of co-operation among staff in the management and care of the pupils.
- While good co-operation among the in-school-management (ISM) team is in evidence, more regular meetings are required to address the current and emerging developmental needs of the school.
- School records indicate that the school has engaged in school self-evaluation (SSE) processes including reflective processes and the identification of priorities for development; school planning documents state that SSE work will be continued when the current industrial relations issues curtailing its implementation have been resolved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The ISM team should meet more regularly to strengthen its leadership role and to facilitate a whole-school approach to progressing school development in key areas; opportunities should be provided for the ISM team members to report on their work to the board of management.
- The school reported that it intended to introduce the Junior Certificate at Level 1 and Level 2 in the 2017-2018 school year; an action plan for the implementation of these programmes should be developed as a priority.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- Good achievement in learning is in evidence in classrooms. The classrooms are well organised and attractively presented. The pupils attending present with a wide range of abilities and lessons are differentiated to cater for the wide range of learning needs. Individualised and group activities facilitate the pupils' beneficial involvement in a wide range of curriculum activities suited to their needs and interests. Pupils were observed engaging purposefully in carefully prepared, well-structured, and motivating learning activities. The pupils are supported in progressing at their own pace and are provided with good affirmation on their work and their contributions in the lessons and activities. Excellent use is made of ICT and AT, enabling pupils to produce work of good quality and share it with others. The use of interactive whiteboards, touch screen technology, individualised switches and modified keyboards were observed in classrooms. Very good examples of linking classroom activities and home using ICT were presented.
- The learning activities and practice in classrooms draw on the Primary School Curriculum and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) guidelines for pupils with general learning disabilities. The development of the pupils' skills in language and communication is an area of consistent emphasis in all classrooms. The use of AT and ICT is skilfully integrated into a wide range of classroom activities. Cross-curricular and thematic approaches are effectively employed in classrooms and pupils participate in learning activities across the curriculum areas including, Language, Mathematics, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Arts Education, Music and Physical Education (PE). Samples of pupils' work were observed in classrooms and impressive displays of art work and thematic projects were on display across the school. A number of garden spaces are used to promote pupils' involvement in Horticulture activities. The school places an appropriate emphasis on the promotion of life-skills and pupils engage purposefully in accessing and using amenities in the local community. The programme of learning activities for individual pupils is guided by their individual education plan (IEP) and the appropriate curriculum guidelines. The school has established good collaborative and multidisciplinary arrangements to support the IEP planning process. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents indicated that their child is doing well in school. All parents agreed that their child was enjoying school.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- Good quality teaching is in evidence in classrooms across the school as teachers employ and adapt a variety of methodologies to enable their pupils to access and engage in a wide range of lessons and curriculum activities. Excellent practice, supported by very high quality preparation and planning, was observed in a number of classrooms. Classroom management is very good and there is a high level of co-operation in each classroom in relation to the care and support of the pupils in the teaching and learning activities. The school has acquired a very good range of teaching resources. There is a good emphasis on active and experiential learning and teaching aids and materials are used effectively to engage pupils' interest and to support their motivation and involvement. Pupils are provided with a broad range of learning experiences and there is an appropriate emphasis on the promotion of functional communication and the development of independence and life-skills as appropriate for individual pupils. A range of useful assessment practices is employed to monitor the progress of individual pupils. In the parent questionnaires, most parents indicate that teaching is good in the school.
- In previous years, post-primary age students, for whom it was suitable, undertook programmes of work leading to the Junior Certificate. Pupils have not taken part in these programmes in recent years. At the time of this evaluation it was planned that teaching staff members were to participate in training for the Junior Certificate Level Two programme. The arrangements to facilitate pupils in accessing the Junior Certificate programmes, at a level suited to their abilities and talents, should be progressed as soon as feasible.

4. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING

- There is very good support for pupils' well-being. Within a welcoming and attractive environment a high quality of care and support is provided to pupils during the school day. A very high level of collaboration among staff is in evidence in this regard. The teachers and SNAs demonstrate very good awareness of the pupils' individual needs and this contributes to a supportive climate. The school has good facilities for physical and motor activities, including soft play, multi-sensory and PE areas, and regular use is made of these. Swimming is an important element of the school's programme and pupils have access to a weekly session in the hydrotherapy pool on campus. A pupils' council has recently been set up and this has provided a forum through which the pupils' voice can have fuller expression in relation to their needs and concerns within the school community.
- In their questionnaire responses, all parents indicated that their child feels safe and well looked after, and that they are treated fairly and respectfully in school. Almost all parents agree that the school helps their child with social and personal development. Opportunities to promote the development of pupils' independence and skills are pursued during the day through specific and incidental teaching opportunities. A good range of activities is planned to enable pupils to access local community settings and amenities, including shops and cafes. There is on-going and open communication between home and school. Home-school diaries are used and a number of classes have very good arrangement for sharing information between classroom and pupils' homes using social media applications. The establishment and progression of a school website is among the school's current priorities. School records indicate that a significant number of pupils were absent for more than twenty days during the last school year (45%). This matter should be further examined by the board of management.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- A committed and conscientious board of management oversees the work of the school. The chairperson and board members are commended for their commitment and support of the development of the school. The principal has promoted good relationships among the teachers, SNAs and other professionals who work on the campus and this has contributed to a collaborative environment and the effective running of the school. The school is engaged in on-going policy development and review. The parent questionnaires indicate that most parents agree that the school is well run and that overall parents are happy with the school. Good inter-professional collaborative work has been undertaken in co-ordinating the provision of support services for pupils in order to reduce the interruption of pupils' learning in classrooms during the school day. However, some challenges remain in this area.
- Good co-operation among the ISM team members of principal, deputy principal and special duties teacher is in evidence. However, more regular ISM team meetings are required to address the current and emerging developmental needs of the school. The duties of the in-school management team should be reviewed to reflect the school's changing needs and priorities such, as the re-introduction of the Junior Certificate programmes and the development of the school website. The ISM team should communicate and consult with the staff team on a regular basis in relation to school developments in the curricular, organisational and pastoral areas. It is advised that an audit of continuing professional development (CPD) needs be undertaken and key areas identified for staff development in relation to the school's emerging priorities. Opportunities should be provided to the ISM team members to report on their work during the school year to the board of management.
- 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*.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The school has been engaged in the processes of SSE and school review over a number of years. School records indicate that the school has engaged in SSE processes including reflective processes and the identification of priorities for development. School planning documents state that SSE work will be continued when the current industrial relations issues curtailing its implementation have been resolved. Concurrently, since September 2016, and working through a consultative process involving the board of management, the school has been engaged in a review of school policies and planning. Among the priorities identified by the school are the introduction of the Junior Certificate at Level 1 and Level 2, the establishment of the Junior Achievement programme and the setting up of a school website.

CONCLUSION

- There is evidence that school management and staff are highly committed to the ongoing development of the school. The school has very good capacity to engage in further improvement processes and to continue its development.

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 Board of Management of Enable Ireland Sandymount School acknowledges the constructive and encouraging Whole School Evaluation report and accept the positive findings.

The Board is pleased with the acknowledgement of the very good standards affirmed by the inspectorate regarding the quality of teaching and learning. The Board is also pleased that the report captures and recognises the positive happy ethos and quality of care and support for pupils at our school.

The acknowledgement from our parents that their children were well cared for was most welcome.

The Board of Management accepts the recommendation that students should pursue the Junior Certificate programme and present for certification. The school has commenced in 2017/18 the Junior Certificate at Level 2 & 3 and looks forward to implementation of Level 1, in due course.

The Board has submitted our attendance policy to Tusla and will continue to make concerted efforts to improve attendance. Children attending our school have complex medical needs that often require medical interventions during the school day. The Board will, however, undertake a detailed analysis of absences in the coming year.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

| Level | Description | Example of descriptive terms |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Very Good | Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision. | Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary |
| Good | Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard. | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement |
| Satisfactory | Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard. | Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas |
| Fair | Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better. | Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve |
| Weak | Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements. | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties; |