

AnRoinnOideachaisagusScileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Louth National School,
Louth Village, Dundalk, County Louth
Uimhir rolla:01553W**

Date of inspection: 18 October 2013



1. Introduction

Louth National School is a rural, co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. There are 158 pupils enrolled and attendance levels are very good. The school has six permanent mainstream teachers, one full-time and two part-time support teachers. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The board of management effectively supports the organisation and development of the school.
- The quality of leadership provided by the principal, in collaboration with the deputy principal, is very good.
- Creditable progress has been made in the use of the self-evaluation process as a tool for school improvement.
- Teachers use a range of teaching approaches effectively and provide high quality educational experiences for the pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics and Music is of a very good standard.
- Pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate very good levels of engagement and participation in lessons.
- The recently refurbished school facilities are suitably resourced and create a comfortable and stimulating learning environment for pupils.
- The parental body is very supportive of the school and the parents' association makes a valuable contribution to school life

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar plean céimniúil uile-scoile a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm do labhairt na Gaeilge. *It is recommended that a whole-school plan for oral Irish be devised and implemented.*
- Provision for differentiated and cooperative learning activities should be further explored to ensure all pupils' learning skills are progressing commensurate with their abilities.
- Additional focused intervention models of in-class support should be developed to incorporate purposeful cooperative teaching that is planned collaboratively.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Finances are carefully managed and externally certified. Systematic review of school policies is an established feature of practice. The board has effectively managed the building of a school extension. It should now consider issuing an annual report to the school community.
- The quality of leadership and management is very high. The principal works purposefully to promote school improvement at instructional and organisational levels. Collaborative relationships among staff are fostered productively. The deputy principal diligently undertakes a range of duties that contributes significantly to the development of the school. Questionnaires distributed to parents during the evaluation indicate high levels of satisfaction with the management of the school.
- The overall quality of the management of resources is very good. Teachers are appropriately deployed and demonstrate commendable commitment to ongoing professional development. Ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. Stimulating learning environments are created and resources are effectively used to support teaching and learning. An e-learning plan should now be developed and implemented to afford pupils further opportunities to use information and communications technology in their learning.
- The quality of the management of communication within the school community is good. A range of effective communication channels has been successfully established to inform parents of their children's progress and of school activities. The parents' association supports the school in many valuable ways.
- The quality of the management of pupils is very good. A range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities is provided to enhance pupils' experience of school. Pupils are very well behaved, respectful and considerate. Affirmative relationships between pupils and teachers were in evidence during the evaluation.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. Administrative and organisational plans have been developed through a collaborative process. The school has engaged in evidence-based school self-evaluation and priorities for development in literacy have been identified. In order to ensure that the self-evaluation process has a positive impact on teaching and learning clearly defined targets for each class level in the multi-grade contexts should be devised and criteria set for its monitoring.
- All teachers provide planning and progress records. A whole-school approach to multi-class planning should be devised, identifying clear learning outcomes for each grade. The approach to the maintenance of monthly reports should also be reviewed to facilitate the monitoring of progress.
- 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. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith I roinnt ranganna ach tá gá le tuilleadh forbartha ar bhonn uile-scoile. Léiríonn roinnt daltaí tuiscint mhaith ar an teanga agus déanann siad iarracht mhacánta struchtúr a chur ar abairtí simplí. Is inmholta mar a aithrisíonn na daltaí ar fad réimse leathan amhrán agus dánta. Chun cur lena gcumas labhartha ní mór plean uile-scoile céimniúil a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm do labhairt na Gaeilge. Léann roinnt daltaí le tuiscint agus le líofacht áirithe. Moltar clár do thús na litearthachta a chur i bhfeidhm chun bunús maith a thabhairt do na daltaí sa léitheoireacht. Ní mór breis béime a chur ar mhúineadh brí agus aithint na bhfocal agus ar fhorbairt scileanna fóineolaíochta na ndaltaí i ngach rang. Bíonn cuid mhaith den scríbhneoireacht a dhéanann na daltaí bunaithe ar leabhair shaothair. B'fhiú tuilleadh deiseanna a thabhairt dóibh scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách a chleachtadh.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish in some classes is good but there is scope for further development on a whole-school basis. Some pupils display a good understanding of the language and make a sincere effort to construct simple sentences. It is praiseworthy that all pupils recite a wide range of songs and poems. A systematic whole-school plan should be devised and implemented for oral Irish to further develop pupils' skills. Some pupils read with a certain understanding and fluency. A plan for early literacy should be implemented to ensure a good foundation in reading for pupils. Further emphasis should be placed on the teaching of word recognition and meaning and on the development of pupils' phonological skills in all classes. Pupils' writing is primarily based on workbooks. Further opportunities to practise independent writing should be provided for pupils.*
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Pupils express themselves with confidence and their oral language skills are developed appropriately. It is commendable that pupils are afforded regular opportunities to explore, recite and create poetry. Discrete incremental oral lessons will further augment pupils' language. Provision for early literacy development is praiseworthy and reading standards are generally high. The close alignment of reading materials to pupils' abilities for instructional reading would further enhance their skills. Some commendable examples of pupils' personal writing across a range of genres are evident. A whole-school approach to the implementation of penmanship style is recommended.
- Overall, pupil attainment in Mathematics is very good. Pupils' mathematical skills are suitably developed and they display a good understanding of concepts. They can appropriately apply concepts and processes in a variety of real life contexts. Additional opportunities for the development of pupils' mathematical thinking and problem-solving abilities through increased use of differentiated cooperative activities would enhance this provision.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Music is very good. Pupils are afforded ample opportunities to purposefully listen and respond to an appropriate repertoire of music. They perform songs with enjoyment and display confidence in performing on both percussion and melodic instruments. The promotion of their musical literacy skills is praiseworthy. Pupils' creativity is suitably fostered through composition. Participation in the school choir and band affords pupils opportunities to further enhance their musical experiences.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is high overall. Stimulating, integrated learning experiences are provided for pupils. Lessons are well structured and teachers use a range of teaching approaches. Clear explanations of new content are given and teachers' questioning is skilful. In the parent questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, almost all parents agreed that teaching is good in the school. Pupils

demonstrate very good levels of engagement and interest in lessons and are afforded some opportunities to work collaboratively. There remains scope to enhance the provision of differentiated and cooperative learning activities to ensure all pupils are progressing commensurate with their abilities and to enhance their higher-order and problem-solving skills.

- Some examples of effective assessment of learning were evident in individual classes. A whole-school approach to assessment for learning across the curriculum and whole-school approaches to formative feedback should now be explored.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Pupils with special educational needs are supported within a caring and an affirming environment. The staged approach is applied in consultation with appropriate partners. Further formalisation of stage one should be considered to ensure that pupils are formally registered and that records of intervention are maintained.
- Individual education plans are formulated for all pupils in receipt of support and in some instances targets are appropriately based on pupils' diagnosed learning needs. This good practice should be extended to all support settings. Comprehensive planning and progress records are maintained. There is scope in some instances, however, for short term planning to be more closely linked to pupils' learning targets. Appropriate records of pupil progress should be maintained in all instances.
- Most of the support lessons observed were well structured, suitably resourced and appropriately paced where pupils engaged productively in a broad range of learning activities. In some instances, however, learning objectives should be further modified to suit the identified needs of pupils. Additional use of manipulatives is advised in some settings to facilitate pupils' understanding of concepts.
- Some successful in-class initiatives have been introduced in the school. Additional focused intervention models should now be developed to incorporate purposeful cooperative teaching that is planned collaboratively.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The report affirms the high standard of teaching and learning in our school and congratulate our teachers and our pupils. The Board also acknowledges the very high levels of satisfaction indicated by parents in their questionnaire responses.

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 intend to phase in the recommendations of the report on an ongoing basis and include them in our system of self-evaluation and continuous improvement.