

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Tallanstown National School,
Tallanstown, Co Louth
Uimhir rolla: 02745N**

Date of inspection: 19 September 2013



1. Introduction

Tallanstown NS is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh. The 275 pupils currently enrolled are distributed across 10 mainstream classes. Attendance is very good. This evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Science. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 and the parents' association actively support the ongoing development of the school.
- The principal manages the school in an efficient manner and has successfully nurtured a rich learner-centred environment for pupils.
- Teachers' effective methodologies contribute significantly to pupils' good attainment levels in many aspects of learning.
- The development of pupils' numeracy skills is highly commendable.
- Pupils are highly motivated readers and attainment levels are very good.
- Pupils display high levels of self-esteem and participate enthusiastically in learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar forbairt chéimniúil a dhéanamh ar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí i nGaeilge ar bhonn uile-scoile. *Pupils' language skills in Irish should be systematically developed on a whole-school basis.*
- In order to effectively implement the school improvement plan for oral language, clear targets and specific actions should be delineated for each class level and structures put in place for the systematic monitoring of progress.
- In-class support should be further developed to ensure purposeful, planned intervention.
- It is recommended that assessment for learning and pupil self-assessment be further promoted.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management supports the work of the school effectively. Meetings are convened regularly, minutes are maintained and school accounts are certified. A financial

report should be furnished and recorded at every board meeting. The board is commended for its improvement of the school building and the provision of appropriate resources. It would be beneficial if all members had responsibility for specific tasks to assist in the overall management of the school. The board is advised to issue an annual report to inform the school community of its priorities and achievements.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal is a reflective leader who promotes a positive school climate, where there is open communication, mutual respect and collaborative decision-making. He is commended for his continuous focus on the quality of learning and the improvement of standards throughout the school. Administrative tasks are undertaken with diligence and all school records are carefully maintained. Members of the in-school management team discharge a range of suitable duties conscientiously and make a constructive contribution to the overall effectiveness of the school. It is advised that they further develop their curricular leadership role to manage the implementation of the school improvement plan.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. Ancillary staff makes a valuable contribution to school life. The school building is maintained to a high standard. Stimulating learning environments have been created and a wide range of resources is successfully employed to support teaching and learning. While some examples of the purposeful use of information and communications technology (ICT) are evident, consideration should be given to its greater use by pupils.
- Open lines of communication are maintained within the school community. Consultation with parents is effectively facilitated. Parents' representatives and responses to parental questionnaires indicated that there is a high level of satisfaction with education provision in the school. A school website would further enhance communication and facilitate the publication of pupils' work. The parents' association plays a significant role in fundraising and in supporting school activities.
- The management of pupils is very good. Teachers are very committed to the general welfare and pastoral care of pupils. Participation in the Green Schools' programme affords pupils opportunities to engage in decision-making. Consideration should now be given to the establishment of a pupils' council. Pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence, respect and self-esteem.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Pertinent statutory policies have been devised and associated organisational procedures have been documented to support their implementation. While curricular policies have been recently reviewed some need to be further contextualised to the needs of the school.
- A positive culture of self-evaluation and improvement is purposefully promoted. The school has engaged in a number of valuable, evidenced-based processes of self-evaluation to devise a school improvement plan. In order to implement this plan productively, clear targets and specific actions should now be delineated for each class level and structures put in place for the systematic monitoring of progress.
- Teachers have developed a whole-school approach to classroom planning and to recording monthly progress reports. In some instances learning programmes focus specifically on pupil outcomes and are appropriately differentiated to meet their various needs. This good practise should be extended throughout the school. Classroom plans should reflect the targets and approaches identified in the school improvement plan. The further use of

monthly progress reports to assess the effectiveness of curriculum implementation at a whole-school level is advised.

- 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

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good with some very good pedagogy in evidence. Praiseworthy aspects of practice observed during the evaluation included well-structured lessons, the use of higher-order questioning, explicit explanation of concepts and well-planned pair work. Pupils engage enthusiastically in all learning activities and attainment is high overall. In order to enhance their learning experiences, further opportunities for collaborative and independent learning is advised.
- Commendable approaches to assessment of learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are evident across the school. Formative assessment strategies should now be agreed and implemented on a whole-school basis. There is potential for the further development of peer and self-assessment practices within differentiated learning contexts.
- Tá caighdeán na foghlama agus an teagaisc sa Ghaeilge go maith i gcuid de na ranganna ach tá gá le forbairt a dhéanamh air, ar bhonn uile-scoile. Baintear feidhm éifeachtach as an bhfilíocht i múineadh na teanga. Tá tuiscint mhaith ar an nGaeilge ag roinnt daltaí agus ar a gcumas struchtúr simplí a chur ar abairtí. Ní mór gníomhaíochtaí éisteachta a bhfuil cuspóir cinnte leo a eagrú go rialta. Moltar clár céimnithe do labhairt na Gaeilge a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn uile-scoile. Léann roinnt daltaí le cruinneas agus le tuiscint áirithe. Is gá, áfach, scileanna na léitheoireachta a mhúineadh go córasach le béim ar leith ar fhogharluach, ar thuiscint agus ar aithint na bhfocal. Tá cuid mhaith den scríbhneoireacht bunaithe ar na leabhair shaothair. Ní mór deiseanna breise a sholáthar do na daltaí le scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách a chleachtadh. Moltar measúnú leanúnach a dhéanamh ar ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge.
- *The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good in some classes but requires further improvement on a whole-school level. Poetry is employed effectively in teaching the language. Some pupils have a good understanding of Irish and can construct simple sentences. Listening activities with a specific purpose should be organised regularly. A whole-school progressive oral Irish plan should be devised and implemented. Some pupils read with accuracy and a certain degree of understanding. It is necessary however, that reading skills be taught systematically with particular emphasis placed on phonological awareness, on word recognition and understanding. Pupils' writing is primarily based on workbooks. Further opportunities should be afforded pupils to practise independent writing. Continuous assessment of pupils' achievement in Irish is recommended.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Pupils have access to a variety of differentiated reading materials and many display very positive attitudes to reading. Reading skills are successfully developed, commensurate with pupils' abilities. The focus on phonological awareness, the promotion of personal reading and the use of class novels enhance pupils' skills. The organisation of writing stations to promote writing is commendable. Consideration should now be given to the development of a whole-school approach to the writing process to ensure pupils have opportunities to edit their work and to practice good penmanship. The staff has identified oral language as a priority area for development. To support this development, specific learning objectives for oral language in English and across the curriculum for each class level should be identified.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. A broad and balanced programme is delivered across all strands of the curriculum. A mathematics-rich environment is created and judicious use is made of games, concrete materials and ICT resources. An appropriate focus is placed on the development of specific mathematical language in some classes. Class discussion, judicious questioning, the use of activity-based approaches and the promotion of oral computation skills are effectively used to develop pupils' understanding of concepts. Pupils generally demonstrate an ability to apply the concepts they have learned in real-life situations. In some classes pupils' problem-solving skills are well developed and open-ended mathematical investigations are effectively explored. This good practice should be extended to all settings with emphasis placed on differentiated, collaborative, problem-solving activities.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is good. Suitable provision is in place for all strands of the curriculum. The school grounds and garden have been developed to support the learning of ecological concepts. Teachers provide opportunities for the development of scientific skills and concepts through activities in the local environment and through the Green Schools' programme. Some well devised opportunities for pupils to discuss fair-testing and work as scientists were observed. It is recommended that all lessons include the explicit teaching of the language of science and that pupils are afforded regular opportunities to develop skills in *Designing and Making*.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a high quality. Commendable emphasis is placed on the early identification of need. Comprehensive individual learning plans are appropriately devised with clearly defined targets set for pupils. Support teachers collaborate with mainstream teachers to optimise the benefits of supplementary tuition. Withdrawal sessions are delivered in an engaging and affirming manner with evidence of pupil progress in accordance with their abilities. As in-class support is embedded, further development of purposeful cooperative team teaching, with all teaching roles clearly defined and progress reviewed regularly, is advised.