

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Ballyroan Boys' NS
Ballyroan, County Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 03359N**

Date of inspection: 3 March 2011



**AN ROINN DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA AND SKILLS**

1. Introduction

Ballyroan Boys' NS operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. Attendance among the 315 pupils is good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- Strong, purposeful leadership is evident at all levels in the school.
- The teachers are strongly committed to the school and the welfare of its pupils.
- The school is successful in creating a strong culture of participation in physical activity.
- Lessons are well structured and resourced.
- Mathematics is very well taught.
- Classroom management strategies employed are very successful.
- Openness to change and participation in new programmes is a hallmark of the school.
- The work undertaken to date to analyse pupil performance in literacy and numeracy is of significant benefit to the school.
- Pupils with special needs are very well catered for in the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The teachers should develop a systematic approach to the sharing of practice and expertise across curriculum areas.
- The school should adopt an agreed, systematic approach to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- Moltar athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar mhúineadh na Gaeilge sa scoil chun seasamhacht agus forchéimniú a fhorbairt. *It is recommended that the teaching of Irish be reviewed in the school in order to develop consistency and progression.*
- In the context of the provision of support for pupils, roles and responsibilities assigned to class teachers and support teachers should be defined further.
- In building on whole school and individual teacher planning practices, consideration should be given to the identification of targets for pupil achievement across curriculum areas. This work will also address how progress is measured.
- The school should establish links with other schools which have autistic units attached.
- The school should apply to participate in the Active School Flag programme.

3. Quality of School Management

- The Board of Management is properly constituted and meets very regularly. The board's members are commendably committed to the school. Its current main priority is the provision of a new school building. It is recommended that the board gives periodic consideration to literacy and numeracy standards in the school.
- Very good purposeful leadership and management are evident in the school. Administrative systems operate effectively. A very strong sense of team has been created. The work of the principal and the In-School Management team (ISM) in that regard is noted. The ISM meets regularly. Assigned duties are carried out effectively. The work of the ISM is ably supported by a significant number of staff members who contribute voluntarily to the work of the school. This sense of a very well run school is supported by almost all parents who indicated their satisfaction with the school in questionnaires.
- A good range of teaching resources is provided and used effectively in the school. ICT facilities are impressive and these add significantly to the manner in which teachers plan and implement their lessons.
- Teachers manage pupils excellently. A strong sense of inclusion is evident in the school. Learning environments are very attractive. The overall atmosphere in the school is one which is very supportive of learning. The willingness of teachers to embrace change is a very positive feature of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Good collaborative work is evident in school planning. Administrative plans successfully underpin practice. Work undertaken in self evaluation to date is particularly good. Staff members have identified areas for development using available evidence and data. Information gleaned, such as the clustering of pupils around the mean on standardised tests, is being used to inform practice.
- It is evident that a number of initiatives are in place as a result of school self evaluation. These include the provision of in-class support from Learning-Support / Resource teachers, along with the introduction of specific reading programmes. As a means of building on very good work to date, it is recommended that consideration be given to identification of targets in curriculum areas and how progress on these targets will be measured.
- Individual teacher planning, for the most part, is satisfactory. It is recommended, however, that current approaches be reviewed to ensure the identification of specific skills to be developed, to guide practice, to ensure that pupil progress is tracked and to ensure that the process is cyclical.
- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall quality of teaching in Ballyroan BNS is good. Some curriculum areas, Mathematics for example, are very well taught. Teachers work diligently and conscientiously. Lessons are well taught, good questioning techniques are used and pupils' efforts are affirmed and encouraged suitably. There is a very good balance of experience and expertise on the staff. It is recommended that systems which would allow for systematic sharing of expertise be devised and implemented.
- I ranganna áirithe baintear caighdeán iontach ard amach san obair ó bhéal sa Ghaeilge i measc na ndaltaí. Léiríonn na daltaí sin dearcadh an-dearfach i leith na teanga. Baintear an-úsáid as áiseanna oiriúnacha mar thaca don fhoghlaim. Tá an léitheoireacht ar chaighdeán sásúil agus feictear píosaí deasa scríbhneoireachta. I ranganna áirithe eile moltar béim sa bhreis a dhíriú ar an gcur chuige cumarsaide. Le linn na hoibre seo, moltar modh an aistriúcháin a sheachaint. Rachaidh múineadh na Gaeilge sa scoil i bhfeabhas le seasmhacht agus forchéimniú. Cé go bhfuil áit shuntasach ag an nGaeilge sa scoil, moltar anois béim sa bhreis ar thionscnaimh cosúil le nath na seachtaine, píosaí Gaeilge níos rialta sa nuachtlitir agus teachtaireachtaí ón oifig trí Ghaeilge.

In some classes, the standard of the pupils' oral work in Irish is exceptionally high. These pupils engage positively with the language. Very good use of resources is made to support learning. The standard of reading is satisfactory and good examples of writing are evident. In other classes, more emphasis is required on the communicative approach. The use of translation should be avoided. The teaching of Irish will improve with consistency and progression. While Irish has a significant place in the school, initiatives such as phrase of the week, regular pieces in the newsletter in Irish and use of Irish over the intercom should be considered.

- Good quality teaching was observed in English. The school recognises that it faces a significant challenge in improving attainment for the majority of pupils. Graded reading schemes, novels and structured phonics programmes are used in the school. Pupils read fluently and confidently. Good work is evident in the development of writing skills. Poetry is taught well and in some classes there is good emphasis placed on the development of oral skills. All of the constituent elements of literacy development are being addressed in classrooms. To improve outcomes in this area, a more systematic approach is recommended. For example, oral skills development should include how to elaborate, how to justify and how to argue relevant points. In planning reading lessons, teachers should establish specific priorities to be addressed.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are well structured with appropriate emphasis placed on the development of oral problem solving skills and on the use of concrete materials. Methodologies are varied and the pupils work collaboratively and purposefully. Very good emphasis is noted in some classes on the development of mathematics-related language. Appropriate assessment practices are used. Learning outcomes are good for most of the children. Work in Mathematics could be enhanced by the regular revision of previously-taught concepts and the development of higher order problem solving. The school may also wish to give consideration to the fact that a significant minority of pupils stated, in questionnaires, that they were not progressing well in Mathematics.
- The quality of teaching in PE is good. An excellent range of resources is provided and used appropriately. In most cases, children are suitably challenged. Good inclusion of special needs children is noted. Many teachers make particular efforts to integrate the pupils' learning in other areas of the curriculum in PE lessons. Developing benchmarks to assess pupil performance and skills should be considered.

- The school is highly commended for the provision of a very wide range of early morning and after-school physical activities. Very high standards are achieved in a range of sports and the school is particularly successful in maximising participation rates among the pupils. Given the huge emphasis placed on physical activity, it is recommended that the school applies for the Active School Flag.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- All pupils in the school are encouraged to perform to the best of their abilities. In that regard, a mix of approaches is utilised in the provision of support for pupils. A lot of good work is evident in the provision of support to children with a range of special needs. Planning for these children is effective and methodologies used to stimulate progress are suitable. There are very good links between the school and external agencies. It is recommended that these are broadened to include links with mainstream schools which have autistic units attached.
- Learning support is offered to pupils in groups and in classrooms. The collaborative approach to developing the pupils' learning is welcomed. To build on this practice, it is recommended that consideration be given to formalising aspects of the roles and responsibilities of class and support teachers. This may result in support teachers taking the lead in respect of some aspects of literacy and numeracy provision in classes.
- It is evident that the teachers are striving to maximise the quality of provision and display great openness and willingness to try new things. While some diagnostic tools and tests are used, a broader range is required to delineate specific targets. Initial work at tracking pupil progress is good and should be built upon.
- A variety of assessment practices, including teacher observation, checklists and standardised tests is used in the school. Pupils in some classes have been taught effectively to conference and to engage in peer editing. These practices should be extended throughout the school.

Published June 2011

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The staff and Board of Management of Ballyroan BNS welcome this positive report. We appreciate the recognition of the strong commitment given by the teachers to the school and to their excellent management of its pupils. The attitude and professionalism of the Inspectors made the inspection a very affirmative experience for the school.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The school is putting in place the necessary steps to implement the recommendations as outlined in the report.