

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

**The Model School,
Bailieborough, County Cavan
Uimhir rolla:05627W**

Date of inspection: 3 October 2013



1. Introduction

The Model School, Bailieborough, County Cavan is under the patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills. It currently has eighty nine pupils enrolled and they are distributed across four mainstream classes. The school is also the base school for one shared learning-support teacher and one shared resource teacher who provide supplementary support for pupils with special educational needs. Pupil attendance patterns are very good. 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 school is characterised by an affirming, inclusive and industrious atmosphere.
- The board of management, parents' association and school staff work in collaboration to effectively support the organisation and development of the school.
- The quality of in-school management and leadership is high.
- Teachers approach their work in a conscientious manner and there is a strong sense of team-work among them.
- Effective use of assessment data underpins the very good quality of school self-evaluation.
- Pupils demonstrate very good behaviour and positive learning outcomes. The quality of learning in Mathematics is particularly praiseworthy.
- The attractive, well-maintained school facilities are suitably resourced to provide a rich learning environment.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that current arrangements regarding shared provision for pupils with special educational needs be reviewed to ensure the school accesses its full entitlement in a regular systematic manner.
- Further development of activity-based learning and co-operative group work throughout the school is recommended to optimise pupil engagement in learning and to enhance their cognitive development.
- B'fhiú deiseanna breise a thabhairt do na daltaí chun a scileanna cumarsáide sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. *It is recommended that additional opportunities be provided to enhance the development of pupils' communication skills in Irish.*
- It is recommended that team-teaching be established to focus on the development of particular pupils' specific skills.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. It is evident that appropriate procedures are well-established to ensure the school is suitably supported in its organisation and development.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is high. The acting-principal fosters a well-ordered, affirming learning environment for pupils. She works purposefully and in close collaboration with staff members to ensure the effective implementation of school improvement initiatives. She is ably supported by a conscientious acting-deputy principal who fulfils a considerable number of duties in an effective manner.
- The overall quality of the management of resources is good. Teachers approach their work with great diligence and their engagement in ongoing professional development reflects positively on the quality of their work. However, it is recommended that current arrangements regarding shared provision for pupils with special educational needs be reviewed to ensure the school accesses its full entitlement in a regular systematic manner. Ancillary staff contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school and to the strong culture of care which is evident.
- The attractive, well-maintained school facilities are suitably resourced to provide a rich learning environment for pupils and teachers. Interactive white boards and digital photography are used effectively to support teaching. There remains scope to optimise the use of the suite of laptops as a medium of learning. Considerable investment in a range of reading materials has supported the successful implementation of literacy initiatives.
- The management of communications within the school community is good. Suitable communication channels have been established to ensure parents are well-informed of school activities and their children's progress. Responses to the parent questionnaires administered during the WSE indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the school. The parents' association works in close collaboration with school personnel and with the board of management to support the work of the school. Strong links have been established between the school and the local community.
- The quality of management of pupils is very good. Affirming pupil-teacher interactions were in evidence during the evaluation. Pupils demonstrate very good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning as reflected in their responses to pupil questionnaires administered during the evaluation.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Overall, the quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation is very good. The future review of a small number of whole-school curricular plans will enhance the incremental development of specific learning skills. A positive culture of professional reflection has been carefully nurtured within the school community. Comprehensive analysis of assessment data together with information yielded from consultation with parents and pupils inform the priorities identified within the whole-school improvement plan. Clearly delineated targets and action plans have been devised to support the implementation and monitoring of relevant literacy and numeracy improvement initiatives.

- All teachers present detailed short and long term planning to support the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum. Clearly delineated monthly progress records are used to monitor progression and continuity in pupils' learning.
- 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 caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cé go mbaintear úsáid éifeachtach as modhanna múinte eagsúla chun eiseamlairí teanga a mhúineadh go spreagúil ní mór anois deiseanna breise a thabhairt do na daltaí chun a scileanna cumarsáide a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Tá réimse leathan de dhánta ar eolas ag na daltaí agus léiríonn siad tuiscint ar fhoclóir cuí. Cuirtear ábhar léitheoireachta éagsúil ar fáil do na daltaí agus léann siad le cruinneas agus le tuiscint maith. Ar an iomlán tá caighdeán sásúil bainte amach ag na daltaí sa scríbhneoireacht ach ní mór clár uile-scoile a chur i bhfeidhm go céimniúil chun an caighdeán seo a fheabhsú.
- *The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Although effective use is made of a range of methodologies to teach in a stimulating way it is necessary to provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills in Irish. Pupils know a wide range of poems and they demonstrate understanding of an appropriate vocabulary. Pupils are provided with a variety of reading material and they read with good accuracy and understanding. Overall, there is a satisfactory standard of writing reached by the pupils but it is necessary to implement a whole-school plan on an incremental to improve this standard.*
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Considerable attention is given to enriching pupils' language and they demonstrate competent language skills together with commendable appreciation of poetry. A multi-faceted action plan to improve literacy within the school is impacting positively on pupils' learning outcomes and reading attainments. The successful adoption of guided reading with an appropriate range of differentiated reading material in some classes is commended. The school is encouraged to extend this programme throughout the school. A strong emphasis has been placed on the systematic development of pupils' writing skills across an appropriate range of genre. To build on this good work it is recommended that a team-teaching model of early intervention be introduced which focuses on the strategic development of pupils' independent writing skills as well as their reading skills. The school has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' handwriting skills and has adopted strategies to bring about improvement in this area.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Teachers use a suitable range of methodologies and resources to facilitate the incremental development of pupils' mathematical concepts and skills. Lesson content is effectively connected to the life experiences of the pupils. The consistent whole-school promotion of mathematical language, problem-solving and mental arithmetic contributes to the pupils' praiseworthy learning outcomes in this curricular area.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in experiments and investigations. Pupils demonstrate reasonable knowledge and awareness about the range of topics explored.

There remains scope to extend their understanding of some scientific concepts such as fair testing and to enhance their classification skills. Commendable attention has been given to the make and design element of the science curriculum throughout the school. Parental facilitation of the after-school programme on robotics for pupils is noted.

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good with some excellent practice observed in some settings. This included the skilful use of suitable differentiation strategies to ensure learning experiences were sufficiently challenging for pupils of varying abilities. Sharing learning objectives and success criteria in an age-appropriate way with pupils is also recognised as a feature of best practice observed. While a range of teaching methodologies is effectively deployed the further development of activity-based learning and co-operative group work throughout the school would optimise pupils' engagement in learning and enhance their cognitive development. Constructive feedback and regular correction of pupils' written work are among the range of effective assessment approaches adopted in this school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a high quality. The staged approach is appropriately applied in consultation with all partners within a strong culture of care and affirmation.
- The recently appointed resource teacher and shared learning support teacher prepare conscientiously to implement education programmes which are closely aligned to pupils' prioritised needs and interests. Comprehensive individual education plans and individual pupil learning programmes are carefully constructed with clearly defined targets for pupils. Lessons observed within the special education context were well structured, suitably resourced and appropriately paced. Careful implementation of the Reading Recovery programme is commended. It is evident that pupils are benefiting significantly from the supplementary supports provided.
- Although some supplementary support is currently provided in-class it is recommended that team-teaching be established to enhance the development of particular pupils' specific skills.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management was pleased to note that the report recognised the quality of teaching and learning in our school, the positive relationships and shared goals of the management, staff, parents and pupils of our school.

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the school for their hard work and commitment in striving to provide high quality learning opportunities to our pupils.

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

Provisions are now in place for pupils with special educational needs to access their full entitlement in a regular manner.

The recommendations in the report are being implemented and will be phased in on a continuous basis.