

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Rathduff NS,**  
**County Cork**  
**Uimhir rolla: 08393P**

**Date of inspection: 5 December 2013**



## 1. Introduction

Rathduff National School in County Cork is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic bishop of Cloyne. Currently, 263 are pupils enrolled. The school has witnessed a substantial increase in enrolment in recent years. Rathduff NS is a school with significant strengths and few areas for improvement. 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.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- Commendable leadership is provided by the board of management and especially by the principal.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Pupils' achievement is generally very good; pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic in their learning.
- Good quality supports are in place for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

The following **main recommendations** are made:

It is recommended that.

- An annual report on the work of the school is prepared for parents.
- Chun tabhairt faoi na dea-chleachtais i múineadh na Gaeilge a fhorbairt, moltar níos mó leanúnachais a chothú sa Ghaeilge labhartha agus scríofa.
- *To advance the good practice in the teaching of Irish further, it is recommended that greater continuity in spoken and in written Irish, be fostered.*
- Members of the in-school management team are given the opportunity to give an account of their work to the board from time to time.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- Board members and staff share a common sense of commitment to making provision of the highest quality.
- The in-school management team is made up of principal, deputy principal and two special duties teachers. The principal shows total dedication to the school and he is highly competent. He is aware of the instructional leadership dimension of his role and plays a significant role in developing the curriculum.
- Each member of the in-school management team takes responsibility for aspects of administration, curricular development and pastoral care of pupils. The deputy principal and special duties teachers use considerable initiative in their work.
- As each member of the team makes a significant contribution to school management it is recommended that they are given the opportunity to give an account of their work to the board from time to time.

- Accommodation is of good quality, tastefully decorated and well maintained and includes a fine new hall. The school secretary is courteous and highly efficient. The school's caretaker attends well to the maintenance of the school. Computer technology has been provided in all classrooms and the staff room also operates as a central computer room. Resources for Special Educational Needs (SEN) are extensive.
- Teachers have availed of extensive continuing professional development. The school should conduct an audit of training taken by teachers and identify priorities for the future.
- Home-school links are maintained by a variety of means. There is an active parents' association and parents are involved in fund-raising, and a variety of school events. Responses to parents' questionnaires indicate that overall parents are very happy with the school. The vast majority indicated that they were happy with the education being provided and considered the school to be a welcoming place. The board should now examine ways in which its work can be communicated more effectively to the parents. It is recommended that an annual report on the work of the school be prepared for parents.
- The teachers' approach to the management of pupils is encouraging and successful. The results of pupils' questionnaires indicate that the majority enjoy their lessons and the vast majority believe that it is a good school.

#### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The school has engaged in substantial self-evaluation with a particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The school plan is well developed and sets out the main policies which guide the operation of the school. A carefully considered school self-evaluation report has been compiled and an impressive school improvement plan has been prepared.
- All teachers provide appropriate long and short-term planning and they set clear learning objectives. Monthly progress reports are maintained.
- 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 very good. Teachers approach their work with enthusiasm and confidence.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama go maith sa Ghaeilge. Sna ceachtanna a breathnaíodh bhí cuspóirí agus struchtúr cinnte ag baint leo. Sna ranganna uile, baintear úsáid as réimse leathan de mhodhanna múinte éifeachtúla.
- Sonraíodh samplaí de chleachtais mhaithe idir obair bheirte, rólimirt agus amhráin. Tá an úsáid a bhaintear as teicneolaíocht an eolais agus cumarsáide agus as cluichí a spreagann na daltaí chun rannpháirtíochta le moladh.

- Leagtar béim inmholta sa phlean ar úsáid neamhfhoirmiúil na Gaeilge mar theanga chumarsáide sa scoil. Tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaith daltaí abairtí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a fhreagairt ach ní mór, áfach, a chinntiú go bhfuil forbairt chórasach ag teacht ar an ábhar teanga atá á mhúineadh ó rang go rang.
- Cuirtear ábhair léitheoireachta oiriúnacha ar fáil agus léann formhór na ndaltaí le cruinneas agus le tuiscint. Déantar monatóireacht chuí ar scríbhneoireacht na ndaltaí ach moltar anois deiseanna breise saor-chumadóireachta a sholáthar dóibh ó rang go rang.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Lessons observed had clear and appropriate objectives and structure. In all classes, a broad range of effective teaching methodologies are employed.*
- *Good examples of practice were evident including pair work, role play and songs. The use of ICT is commendable as are various games which motivate pupils to participate in lessons.*
- *In the school plan, commendable emphasis is put on the informal use of Irish as the language of communication throughout the school. The majority of pupils are able to form sentences but there is need to ensure that there is a systematic development of the language content taught from class to class.*
- *Appropriate reading material is provided and the majority of pupils read with understanding and accuracy. A good number of pupils read with correct pronunciation and good understanding. Appropriate monitoring of pupils' writing occurs but it is now recommended that additional opportunities for free writing be provided from class to class.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is highly praiseworthy. Standardised tests indicate that pupils' overall attainment is very good. Libraries are well stocked with a suitable range of fiction and non-fiction books.
- Discrete oral language activities are taught successfully. Pupils recite a range of suitable poems with expression. Pupils' reading competence is developed effectively through the use of suitable reading programmes. The teachers' success is rooted in effective development of phonological awareness, coupled with the acquisition of a suitable sight vocabulary. Good use of information and communication technology was observed. The school has also introduced worthwhile innovations including peer-tutoring and formal parental involvement in supporting children's reading.
- Team-teaching arrangements with special education teachers allow for maximum individual involvement in group discussions. Throughout the school there is a good focus on the development of comprehension skills using the most up-to-date approaches.
- Handwriting skills are developed systematically and, as the pupils progress through the school, they produce high-quality writing for functional and creative purposes in a variety of genres. In a small number of cases, closer attention should be paid to the quality of pupils' penmanship.
- The teaching of Mathematics is of very high quality and very good standards are achieved. Classrooms are well-presented as mathematics-rich environments. There is a consistent emphasis on the development of the language of Mathematics. ICT is used effectively.

- The focus on oral and mental mathematical work, manipulation of concrete resources and collaborative learning activities are commendable. Across the school there is an emphasis on encouraging estimation. Learning tasks are differentiated so that the pupils' learning needs are addressed. While textbooks are used there is not an over reliance on them. Pupils' written work is carefully monitored and learning is checked through skilful questioning.
- The school has set out an ambitious programme for Science. Teachers are conscious of the importance of pupils' working scientifically and of developing their ideas by testing them in structured investigations. Schemes of work are carefully prepared and provide effective guidance to teachers on how to sequence the work to be covered. A range of suitable equipment has been assembled which allows for a wide range of practical work that pupils can carry out in small groups and which promotes the development of the skills of scientific investigation. Extensive practical work was observed; the teachers drew on pupils' own experiences, involving them in an active way at all stages. Pupils were well motivated and participated with enthusiasm in activities including practical teacher demonstrations, whole class discussion, experimental work and recording of findings.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- It is evident from adult-pupil interactions that the school promotes a climate of support and there is sensitivity to individual needs. At whole-school level, class teachers accept first-line responsibility for the progress of all pupils and procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are clear. Three full-time special education teachers (SET) and one part-time teacher, shared with another school, are assigned to provide support to pupils. These teachers cater for pupils who require learning support and for children who present with a number of low incidence disabilities. Very good co-operation between support teachers and class teachers was in evidence.
- A significant amount of SET time is devoted to providing in-class support. The SETs were observed to approach their work in a proficient manner both within classrooms and in withdrawal settings. Individual Education Plans are carefully developed and learning targets relate to specific learning objectives. The approach to the development of IEPs and to the identification of various learning goals allows for the substantial involvement of parents.
- Sensitive care is provided by responsive Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). They play an important role in meeting the care-needs of pupils and in enabling pupils to access the curriculum. SNAs are aware of the importance of promoting pupils' independence.
- There is evidence also of ample cooperation and collaboration between the school staff and members of the multi-disciplinary team and with the visiting teacher service for learners with sensory disabilities.
- The school has highly effective arrangements for assessing pupils' progress and teachers use assessment information to guide programme planning. The practice of involving pupils in self-assessment of learning which is already a feature of practice in some classes should be extended.
- The principal reports that the school supports disadvantaged pupils if necessary through the careful and sensitive management of resources.

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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 Board of management of Rathduff NS. Welcomes the very positive recent report and finds it to be fully affirming at the high standards of quality of teaching and learning in our school. We are pleased that the report recognises the commitments, dedication, enthusiasm and support of the entire school community. We particularly note that Rathduff NS is a school with significant strengths and few areas for improvement.

The board wishes to thank the inspectorate for the courteous, professional, thorough and constructive manner in which they carried out their inspection.

### **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 welcome the recommendations and implementation of each will be part of our continuing system of self-evaluation and on-going improvement.

Following the evaluation members of the in-school management team has been afforded an opportunity to present an account of their work to the board.