

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Joseph's Primary School  
Tipperary Town  
Co. Tipperary  
Uimhir rolla: 09432E**

**Date of inspection: 16 October 2013**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Joseph's Primary School is a vertical primary school in Tipperary town catering for girls. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cashel and Emly. There are 166 pupils enrolled, six of whom are enrolled in the new pre-school, Joseph Beag. The school receives School Completion Programme (SCP) support. The attendance of most pupils is very good and the school is commended highly for the strategies it operates to improve school attendance levels. 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 school is managed successfully by a dedicated board of management.
- The principal is a very effective curriculum leader and has established good priorities for the development of the school.
- The staff team is strongly committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils.
- The parents' association is very active and provides valuable support to the school.
- St. Joseph's has an active and articulate student's council and the pupils engage with enthusiasm in their learning.
- There is consistent improvement in overall attainment in English reading in recent years.
- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is of a high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The members of the in-school management team should meet regularly and report annually on their work to the board of management.
- In order to further improve the learning outcomes for pupils, a wider range of oral mental mathematics activities should be implemented throughout the school.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed successfully by a dedicated board of management. Board members give generously of their time and skills to manage the provision in the school and the board's work is clearly outlined in the recorded minutes of meetings. School accounts are carefully maintained and are certified annually. A three-year action plan has been formulated to direct a range of work in the school.

- The principal leads the school in a highly commendable manner. She is a very effective curriculum leader and has established good priorities for development in the future. Administration systems are efficient and school documentation is maintained and presented in an exemplary manner. The members of the in-school management team share in the decision-making process and undertake their allocated responsibilities with commitment. In order to utilise the team's full potential, it is recommended that assigned duties are reviewed and that the team's role in leading school improvement be strengthened further. Team members should meet regularly and report annually on their work to the board of management. Almost all parents expressed the view that the school is well run.
- The management of resources is excellent. The building and grounds are maintained to the highest standards. Stimulating and orderly environments are provided for learning and all available resources, including ICT, are used skilfully to aid teaching. Ancillary staff, the cleaner, the caretaker and the secretary contribute significantly to the effective running of the school.
- The school climate is warm and friendly and almost all parents report that the school is welcoming of them. A comprehensive school website and frequent newsletters provide useful information to parents and facilitate meaningful communication between home and school. The parents' association is very active and provides valuable support to the school through a range of fundraising projects.
- The management of pupils is a key strength of the school. Thoughtfully selected strategies are used to lead the pupils to value and display pride in their work, thus serving to enhance their confidence and self-esteem. They are conscientious and engage with enthusiasm in guided and in independent learning activities. Successful and continued participation in the *Green Schools* programme supports the overall good quality of pupil achievement. St. Joseph's has an active and articulate student's council which is representative of the pupils from third to sixth class.

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

- Whole-school organisational planning is of a very good quality. A broad range of administrative policies have been devised collaboratively and their implementation assists the efficient operation of the school. There is a need to further refine elements of some curricular policy statements so that they provide clearer guidance on the content to be taught and the methodologies to be used at each class level.
- Teachers plan conscientiously for their work, the quality of long-term and short-term plans is very good. Planning has a significant positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- A thorough analysis of learning outcomes in numeracy has been undertaken as part of the school self-evaluation process (SSE). As the school engages further with the SSE process, whole-school curriculum plans and individual teachers' classroom planning should reflect the targets and approaches identified in school improvement plans so as to further inform classroom practice at all levels.
- 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 overall quality of teaching is very good and the staff team is strongly committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils. The teachers are reflective practitioners and they co-operate very well, building capacity within the school and ensuring that the pupils benefit from current best practice in teaching and learning. Lessons are well structured. Explanation of new content is clear and teacher questioning is skilful. Pupil learning is good overall. The pupils successfully apply themselves to learning tasks and demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning. Almost all of them indicated through the pupil questionnaires that their teachers explain things clearly in lessons.
- The teachers draw on a useful range of assessment tools to monitor individual pupil progress. Results of standardised testing are recorded carefully and pupil attainment is tracked and monitored. Assessment practices have been developed successfully and now include increased emphasis on pupil self-assessment in most classes.
- Tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Úsáidtear modhanna múinte éagsúla, cluichí, rólghlacadh, spreagthaigh shúl agus an clár bán ilgníomhaíochta san áireamh, chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Múintear agus úsáidtear réimse maith foclóra agus nathanna cainte sa chumarsáid neamhfhoirmiúil agus sa chumarsáid fhoirmiúil. I bhformhór na ranganna, daingnítear an teanga trí amhránaíocht agus rainn. Chun cumas labhartha agus saibhreas teanga na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, b'fhiú béim níos láidre ar bhonn scoile uile a leagadh ar dhánta, rainn agus amhráin. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí á saothrú go céimniúil ach d'fhéadfaí béim sa bhreis a chur ar scileanna scríbhneoireachta neamhspleácha.
- *A good standard is being achieved in the teaching and learning of Irish. Language is taught through a variety of methodologies, including games, role-play, visual stimuli and the use of the interactive whiteboard. A good range of vocabulary and phrases are taught and used in informal and formal conversations. In most classes language is consolidated through singing and rhymes. In order to further improve the pupils' achievements, increased emphasis should be placed on a school-wide basis on poetry, rhymes and songs. The pupils' reading and writing skills are developed systematically but more emphasis could be placed on developing independent writing skills.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. The pupils speak confidently when interacting with their teachers and with their peers. Commendable emphasis is placed upon the development of pupils' oral language skills. Many of them demonstrate an ability to express their views and opinions clearly and competently. There is a strong reading culture in the school, supported by excellent library facilities and there is consistent improvement in overall attainment in English reading in recent years. The pupils enjoy regular opportunities to engage in writing in a wide variety of genres. The quality of their written work, including content, presentation and handwriting is high.
- In Mathematics, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Classrooms are very well resourced and there is a systematic approach to the development of pupils' mathematical language. Good work is undertaken on the number strand and an appropriate balance between the strands is achieved throughout the school. The school environment is used most effectively as a means of concept

development and to aid consolidation of learning. Outcomes for Mathematics are generally good for the majority of pupils. A whole-school approach to the implementation of a wider range of oral mental mathematics activities is recommended in order to further improve the learning outcomes for the pupils.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is very good. All teachers emphasise the development of pupils' skills as historians. The pupils' understanding of time and chronology, change and continuity, cause and effect are appropriately developed through the use of story and legend and through exploration of key historical events. Independent learning skills are suitably advanced through research and involvement in project work and samples of this high quality work is displayed attractively in classrooms. Creditable emphasis is placed on local studies and on personal history throughout the school. Pupils display a very good overall knowledge and understanding of topics taught.

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

- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs, including pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), is of a high quality. Programmes of learning are devised collaboratively and based on the outcomes of diagnostic tests and reports from other professionals. The pupils are progressing well in relation to their individualised learning targets. Their confidence in their ability to achieve is built successfully.
- The special education team meets frequently and adopts a whole-school management strategy in order to ensure optimal levels of provision for all pupils. In this school year, the continuum of support has commendably been extended to include some provision in literacy for accelerated learners.
- In September a new class was established in the school. This class, Joseph Beag, is a pre-school class for pupils on the autistic spectrum. The school community welcomes Joseph Beag and the board of management is highly praised for its initiative in establishing the class. An attractive sensory playroom has been developed and a new outdoor play area is underway for the benefit of the six pupils in Joseph Beag. The class team, led by the class teacher, is both hard-working and deeply committed to this project.
- The needs of the pupils are currently being identified. Once established, plans will be put in place to address these needs so as to enable the pupils to acquire effective learning skills and allow them to make good progress in their learning, commensurate with their abilities. The whole school will benefit from the input that has been sought for Joseph Beag from both the National Council for Special Education and the Special Education Support Service.

*Published March 2014*