

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Patrick's Boys' National School,
Millbourne Avenue, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

Uimhir rolla: 11525A

Date of inspection: 3 October 2013



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

1. Introduction

St Patrick's Boys' National School is an all-boys school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Current enrolment is 491 pupils and attendance levels are very good. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in thirteen mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings. 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 managed by an effective and strategic board of management.
- A warm and nurturing school climate exists.
- Pupils are both content and interested in their learning, engaging enthusiastically in learning activities.
- The school principal and in-school management team effectively encourage and empower staff to engage with change and educational initiatives.
- The school is well resourced, with staff engaging in a wide range of professional development courses and initiatives.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Very high standards in literacy and numeracy were noted during the inspection
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is delivered in a very affirming manner, with teaching interventions being skilfully adapted to meet specific learning needs.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- *Moltar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, trí téacsanna léitheoireachta breise a úsáid agus níos mó béime a chur ar scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách agus ar Ghaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil.* It is recommended that the language skills of pupils in Irish be further developed and more emphasis placed on a variety of reading texts, on independent writing and on informal Irish.
- It is recommended that in the next review of duties assigned to post-holders, greater provision for literacy and special education be considered.
- It is recommended that the school review its current format of recording monthly progress records to facilitate more detailed recording and monitoring of curriculum implementation.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Meeting regularly, it manages the school in a proactive manner. School resources are strategically managed. School finances are certified. While minutes of all board meetings are recorded there is scope for more detail pertaining to specific minute items in some instances.
- The school principal actively and successfully creates a warm and nurturing school environment where staff and pupils alike are energised about learning. He proactively empowers teachers to engage with a range of educational initiatives and change. The principal is ably supported by a committed in-school management team which works collaboratively to promote high standards of teaching and learning. It is recommended that in the next review of duties, greater provision for literacy and special education be considered. Staff members display high levels of commitment to the school.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school has a broad and stimulating selection of resources. It benefits greatly from initiatives and the expertise of staff of St. Patrick's College of Education. School staff has engaged in a wide range of professional development courses which serves to inform good practice. Ancillary staff makes a valuable contribution to the school.
- The school makes use of a number of approaches to communicate with parents. It benefits from the valuable support of the parents' association. The responses to the parent questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the school.
- The quality of management of pupils is very good. Teachers interact with pupils in a very respectful and affirming manner, serving to create nurturing and cooperative classroom environments. Their behaviour during the evaluation was excellent. Pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation which was reflected in responses to pupil questionnaires administered during the evaluation. Pupil participation in decision making processes is effectively facilitated through involvement in the Green Schools programme.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation processes is high. Organisational policies are well designed and user-friendly. Curricular policies are carefully constructed and are comprehensive in scope. It is recommended that a policy on teacher allocation be developed. The school actively engages in reflective practises. As part of its school self-evaluation practices, a number of initiatives and targets have been established in the field of literacy. Regular review of progress should incorporate a reframing of some improvement targets to ensure optimum specificity. It is recommended that greater parental involvement be facilitated in the review of school policies.
- All teachers present short and long-term planning which, overall, is of a very good quality. Content is clearly delineated in a progressional manner. Long-term plans provide contextualised and specific learning objectives. Overall, objectives in short-term plans are specific. It is recommended that the school review its current format of recording monthly progress records to facilitate more detailed monitoring of curriculum implementation.
- 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 na foghlama agus an teagaisc sa Ghaeilge ard, ach ní mór gnéithe áirithe a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Baineann na daltaí taitneamh agus tairbhe as na ceachtanna. Cuirtear béim chruthaitheach agus fhiúntach ar fhilíocht agus ar amhránaíocht. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as raon leathan de mhodhanna múinte agus as acmhainí éagsúla. Cuirtear béim thairbheach ar obair bheirte agus ar dhrámaíocht chun deiseanna labharta a thabhairt do na daltaí. Labhraíonn siad le muinín faoi ábhair éagsúla. I gcásanna áirithe, baineann na hoidí úsáid rialta as Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil agus b'fhiú an dea-chleachtas seo a leathnú ar fud na scoile. Léann na daltaí le cumas. Moltar téacsanna léitheoireachta breise a úsáid. Scríobhann na daltaí go cumasach sa Ghaeilge, ach b'fhiú níos mó béime a chur ar scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách i gcásanna áirithe.

- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is high, but certain aspects could be further developed. Pupils derive enjoyment and benefit from the lessons. Creative and worthwhile emphasis is placed on poetry and singing. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of teaching methodologies and of various resources. Beneficial emphasis is placed on pair work and drama to provide the pupils with speaking opportunities. They speak with confidence about various topics. In certain instances, teachers make regular use of informal Irish and this good practice should be further extended throughout the school. Pupils read with capability. It is recommended that additional reading texts be used. The pupils write capably in Irish, but additional emphasis should be placed on independent writing in certain instances.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. A broad range of methodologies are in use. Pupils display very good oral language skills. Teachers make effective provision for the development of these skills in both discrete and integrated contexts. Pupils' reading skills are suitably developed, with very effective emphasis on the development of word-attack and phonological skills. Pupils read with both meaning and fluency. Teachers present them with a broad range of literature with commendable emphasis on poetry. Good differentiation practices are in place. Very high quality provision is in place for the writing process and the development of pupils' writing skills across a range of genres. Teachers carefully monitor pupil progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Classrooms are well presented as mathematics-rich environments. There is some potential for the further development of the overall school as a mathematics-rich environment. Very good emphasis is placed on the development of mathematical language and mental arithmetic. Lessons make very good use of concrete resources, providing the pupils with hands-on activities to develop and consolidate conceptual understanding. Overall, content is effectively linked to the pupils' life experiences. High quality provision is in place for cooperative learning, for the discussion of concepts and for the development of pupils' problem solving skills. Good differentiation practices are in place.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is very good. Pupils display a keen interest in and knowledge of scientific processes and phenomena. Lessons make very good use of concrete resources, cooperative learning and discussion. Pupils are afforded many opportunities to work scientifically, with very good emphasis on the development of skills. Suitable emphasis is placed on fair testing and on design and make activities.

- The quality of overall teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are very well structured and serve to both stimulate and maintain pupil interest effectively. A variety of methodologies is creatively employed, with teachers making very good use of hands-on activities, talk and discussion and concrete resources. In some instances, there is potential for the further use of pair work. Pupils display pride and interest in their work, applying themselves to tasks and activities with enthusiasm and focus. Pupils' written work is carefully monitored and a range of assessment practices is in use.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is of a high quality. It is commendable that in recent years the team has prioritised areas for improvement within SEN provision. Teacher planning is of a high quality with education programmes clearly specifying targets that are based on the identified pupils' learning needs. Teaching is skilfully adapted to meet these needs and positive levels of progress are in evidence. The staged approach is applied to support for pupils. In some instances, there is need to clearly document the continuum of support provided for pupils. A range of models of in-class support have been explored. Additional development of purposeful cooperative planning would further enhance such practice. Consideration should now be given to the introduction of early focused intervention programmes in the infant section.
- Very good structured teaching was observed in classes for pupils with specific speech and language disorders. The continuous intervention of the speech therapist is praiseworthy. It is advised that all curricular planning should be underpinned by language objectives. Pupils actively engage in a broad range of learning activities commensurate with their abilities and progression in pupils' language is evident. The special needs assistants make a considerable contribution to overall provision of SEN.

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 and staff of St. Patrick's Boys' National School, Drumcondra, welcome the Whole School Evaluation report. It affirms the high quality of teaching and learning in our school and it is an acknowledgement of the commitment and dedication shown by all within the whole school community.

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 board of management and staff have noted the recommendations and they will be addressed within the context of our school self-evaluation planning going forward.