

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Our Lady of Lourdes National School,
Slieverue, County Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 12476S**

Date of inspection: 05 December 2013



1. Introduction

Our Lady of Lourdes NS is a ten-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school with a current enrolment of 214 pupils. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. Attendance levels in the school are excellent. 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 board of management is very supportive of the school, with members sharing willingly their expertise and skills.
- The principal provides efficient and purposeful leadership and together with the staff is committed to ensuring that the pupils benefit from a broad educational experience.
- The parents' association contributes beneficially to the range of resources in use in the school and the breadth of activities provided for pupils.
- Teaching is of a high quality, with teachers employing a broad range of methodologies and resources, to support their work in the classrooms.
- Overall pupil achievement levels in English and Mathematics are very good.
- In Irish, the pupils are capable of communicating accurately.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Assessment data should be used more systematically to cater for the differing needs of pupils.
- In the provision for pupils with special educational needs greater emphasis should be placed on prevention and early intervention and on the further development of in-class support models.

3. Quality of School Management

- The diligent board of management is very supportive of the school. The members of the board share willingly their expertise and skills to ensure the efficient management of the school. Positive and productive relationships exist between the board, school staff and parents.
- The principal, who has a long association with the school, provides efficient and purposeful leadership. The holistic development of each child in a happy school environment and the provision of a broad educational experience are central to her vision.

- She is ably assisted by a deputy principal and two special duties teachers who carry out their duties with dedication and commitment. It is advised that the team enhance their curriculum leadership role in relation to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the curriculum.
- It is noteworthy, that in the parent questionnaires, all parents agreed that the school was well run.
- A strong community spirit is maintained through very good relationship and communication structures with parents and the wider school community. The parents' association co-operates closely with teachers in the school. It contributes beneficially to the range of resources in use and the breadth of activities provided for pupils.
- The open and welcoming approach of the school is acknowledged in the parent questionnaires, with all parents responding that the school is welcoming of them. The long established book rental scheme is commended.
- The quality of the school building and grounds is very good. A broad range of teaching and learning resources is provided and used purposefully. All ancillary staff members carry out their work with commitment and in a competent manner.
- The management of pupils is very good. They are treated with respect and their holistic development is nurtured. They are attentive, eager and motivated in their learning.
- Opportunities are provided for pupil participation in relevant decision-making through the Green School's committee. The school is lauded for its commitment to the Green School's programme and for actively pursuing its seventh green flag. The ongoing commitment to the development of the pupils' skills and interests across a range of subjects through curricular and extra-curricular activities is also praised.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is of a high standard. A collaborative approach to planning is adopted, involving board of management members, teachers and parents. Organisational policies, which are clear and accessible, give suitable guidance. The comprehensive curriculum plans are reviewed regularly.
- The school engages productively in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. It has undertaken the review of literacy and following this review has identified and targeted areas of its work that can be improved. Through the school improvement plan these areas are currently being addressed. The school has recently begun reviewing its implementation of the mathematics curriculum.
- The quality of teachers' individual classroom planning is good. Each teacher produces comprehensive long-term and short-term schemes of work. Progress records are maintained dutifully.
- 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 teaching is commendable with some very good practice evident. Teacher-pupil interactions are caring and positive and pupils' responses to questionnaires indicate that almost all pupils consider that this is a good school. A broad range of teaching and learning methodologies is employed and pupils meaningfully engage in collaborative learning opportunities. Written work is well monitored by teachers, but further guidance on presentation and handwriting is advised in some classes.
- The teachers draw on a suitable range of assessment tools to monitor individual progress. Standardised screening tests are administered annually and results are collated and analysed at a whole-school level. It is recommended that assessment data be used more systematically to cater for the differing needs of pupils, including the high achieving pupils.
- Tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Cuireann na h-oidí an t-ábhar foghlama i láthair go spreagúil trí dhea-úsáid a bhaint as modhanna múinte éagsúla agus raon d'acmhainní. Cuireann na hoidí béim ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach i múineadh stór focal agus structúr na teanga. Tugtar deiseanna do na daltaí iad seo a chleachtadh i bpéirí agus i gcomhthéacsanna oiriúnacha i rith na gceachtanna agus tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaith díobh abairtí a chumadh agus cumarsáid chruinn a dhéanamh sa teanga. Aithrisíonn na daltaí rainn, dánta agus amhráin go muiníneach.

Léann na daltaí na téacsleabhair ranga le cruinneas agus is féidir leo ceisteanna a fhreagairt. Tá gnéithe le forbairt maidir le leathnú a n-eispéiris foghlama trí phlé le háiseanna leitheoireachta breise. Múintear scileanna scríbhneoireachta go dícheallach agus sonraítear go bhfuil caighdeán oiriúnach á bhaint amach ag na daltaí. Moltar *Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Rialta* a úsáid chun dul chun cinn na ndaltaí a mheas go caighdeánach.

- *Teaching and learning in Irish is of a good standard. Lesson content is implemented in a stimulating manner through the purposeful use of a range of teaching approaches and resources. The teachers emphasise the communicative approach when teaching new vocabulary and language structure. The pupils are provided with opportunities to practise these in pairs and in suitable contexts during lessons and many of them are capable of structuring sentences and communicating accurately in the language. The pupils recite rhymes, poetry and songs confidently.*

The pupils read with accuracy and they are able to answer questions. There is scope to extend the breadth of their learning experiences through engagement with additional reading material. Writing skills are taught diligently and appropriate standards are in evidence. It is advised that the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Primary Schools be used, to get a standardised measure of pupils' progress.

- Effective practice is in evidence in the teaching of English. There is a clear focus in all classrooms on developing the pupils' oral language skills and they express their views confidently and competently. Pupils respond to and appreciate poetry is actively nurtured.
- A variety of effective methodologies is used to stimulate pupils' interest in reading and pupils display proficient reading standards. In the pupil questionnaires, most pupils state that they are doing well at reading. However, it is advised that greater differentiation in the use of class texts be introduced, to ensure that all pupils are reading at their appropriate instructional level.

- All pupils engage in a broad range of writing tasks across the genres and good quality examples are evident. To build on this good work it is advised that systematic monitoring of pupil progress in writing across the genres be undertaken, to ensure that the pupils' skills are being developed incrementally.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and learning outcomes in this area. Teachers skilfully link mathematical concepts to the pupils' everyday environment. Concepts are explained clearly and a hands-on approach to learning is employed effectively. Commendable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic, the development of number facts and on problem-solving tasks.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is very good. Pupils are given opportunities to engage in the process of drama using a range of drama techniques. They display an ability to role-play, improvise and enter into character with spontaneity. Through interaction with others in group scenes, pupils are enabled to cooperate and create fictional relationships. Content is linked effectively to themes explored in other curricular areas.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Competent practice is in evidence in the provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Pupils experience learning in an encouraging and supportive environment. Lessons are well structured and pupils engage positively in tasks. Suitable resources are used effectively.
- Education programmes have been developed for pupils, in consultation with parents and class teachers, and are reviewed regularly.
- In light of recent personnel changes and the increased availability of support teaching, the planned review of SEN provision is welcome. As part of this review it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on prevention and early intervention and on the further development of in-class support models.

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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 together with the staff of Slieverue National School is happy with the positive and practical support that both the report and the evaluation have provided for our school. We are also pleased that the report affirms the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of our pupils, parents, staff and Board of Management. The recognition of the high quality of teaching, learning and support of our pupils is both affirming and encouraging.

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 for 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

The Board of Management notes the recommendations of the report and has already commenced the development of in-class support models as recommended therein.