

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St Anne's National School
Castlerea, Co. Roscommon
Roll number: 13198V**

Date of inspection: 16 September 2013



1. Introduction

St Anne's N.S. is located in Castlerea and caters for girls from infants to sixth class, and for boys from infants to first class. It has DEIS Urban Band Two status since 2006. There are currently 132 pupils enrolled in the school. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. Attendance in the school is improving steadily in line with DEIS targets.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education. 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:

- The school has a very hard-working, efficient and professional staff that engages in regular continuing professional development to meet the needs of pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education is very good.
- There is clear evidence of the consistent development of pupil achievement in literacy and Mathematics.
- The principal is committed to, and highly successful in, effecting school improvement through the school self-evaluation process.
- The quality of home-school communication is very good. The newly established parents' association is a welcome development in home-school links.
- Teachers have developed some very effective assessment procedures for literacy and Mathematics.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A greater emphasis should be placed on the recitation of poetry in both Irish and English.
- Teachers should consider the inclusion of vocabulary development in their oral language lessons to enhance pupils' communication skills.
- An agreed approach to the development of handwriting should be implemented.
- Problem-solving in Mathematics should be further developed.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Board members meet regularly and discuss school-related matters in a professional and proactive manner. They are clearly informed of the school's self-evaluation agenda and its targets in literacy and numeracy. Minutes are maintained of each meeting. School accounts are managed prudently and are certified annually.
- The quality of the in-school management team is very good. The team meets regularly and maintains records of discussions and decisions. Each member is hard working and efficient in executing her curricular, organisational and pastoral duties. The deputy-principal has undertaken professional development in leadership and management which further supports the work of the principal. The principal is highly organised and effective in her day-to-day management of the school. She displays a clear vision for the school and promotes professional practice. She has been highly successful in effecting school improvement.
- The quality of resource management is very good. The staff implements a breakfast club and a homework club. The school has invested in a wide range of appropriate curricular resources, including those which support literacy, numeracy and play. The school is effective in its implementation of a book rental scheme. There is equitable distribution of pupils across classes in line with Circular 20/07.
- The quality of home-school communication is very good. The school communicates with parents through informative newsletters, the school website and information meetings. Annual parent-teacher meetings are organised and parents are issued with a written end-of-year report which details their child's attainment in standardised tests. A parents' association has very recently been established. Representatives of parents expressed their satisfaction with school standards, the inclusive nature of the school and the nature in which individual pupils' needs are met. Results of a parent questionnaire indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school and the quality of teaching. The home-school-community liaison teacher prioritises home visits to parents of infant children. Initiatives to promote parental involvement and to encourage parental education are also implemented.
- The quality of pupil management is very good. Pupils are managed sensitively and with care. Teachers are very aware of the learning and social needs of their pupils. They engage in significant levels of continuing professional development to ensure they adequately support individual pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. The school has a well-established process of setting SMART targets to promote improvement in the areas of literacy, numeracy and attendance. The quality of progress in each of these areas is noteworthy. The school should implement a more effective system of review for curriculum plans.
- All teachers produce long-term and short-term schemes of work. The quality of this planning is very good. There are effective links with the curriculum and there is clear continuity and progression in the taught curriculum. The high quality differentiation observed during the evaluation should be recorded in a systematic manner.

- 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, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers have achieved very positive relationships with their pupils, which results in very high levels of pupil participation. Pupils' literacy and numeracy results continue to improve in line with school-developed targets. Considering the very high quality practices and procedures observed in individual classrooms, efforts should be made to increase the sharing of classroom practice with a view to developing whole-school approaches.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá caighdeán an teagaisc, na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go maith. Baintear feidhm as réimse fíor-leathan de mhodhanna múinte agus d'acmhainní chun rannpháirtíocht agus suim na ndaltaí a chinntiú. I ranganna áirithe bhí na daltaí in ann caint go leanúnach faoi théamaí éagsúla. Moltar an cleachtas seo a leathnú sa scoil. Bhí cleachtais éifeachtacha le feiceáil i ngach seomra ach ní raibh siad curtha i bhfeidhm ar bhonn uile-scoile, áfach. Moltar béim sa bhreis a leagan ar rannta agus amhráin, agus réimse níos leithne de thascanna scríbhneoireachta a fhorbairt de réir mar a dhéantar sa Bhéarla.

In Irish, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. A very wide range of methodologies and resources is used to ensure pupil participation and interest. In some classes pupils can speak at length about specific topics. This practice should be extended across the school. Effective practices were observed in each classroom but these, unfortunately, were not implemented at whole-school level. It is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on poems and songs, and on developing a wider range of writing tasks to mirror such work in English.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. The teachers are very consistent in the development of literacy skills, which continues to yield very successful outcomes. The *Aistear* curriculum has been introduced very effectively at infant level where pupils learn through play. The use of both ability and mixed-ability reading groups in each class ensures learning is maximised for pupils. Senior pupils engage enthusiastically with class novels. The whole-school approach to writing genres and to the development of comprehension skills is particularly effective. An added emphasis on poetry and vocabulary development would further enhance the oral-language skills of pupils. It is also recommended that an agreed approach to the development of handwriting be implemented.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Teachers engage pupils fully through the use of pair work, talk and discussion, discovery learning, maths trails and maths games. There is a good emphasis on the development of mathematical language and pupils are given ample opportunity to use this vocabulary. Skills are developed appropriately through the content. A very good emphasis is placed on mental maths. An increased emphasis on problem-solving would benefit the pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very good. This subject is taught very effectively through the very positive school and classroom atmospheres where pupils are clearly valued and supported in their learning. SPHE is also integrated very successfully with other curricular areas including language and literacy. The most effective discrete lessons observed were

those that promoted strategy-based interventions. The school's relationships and sexuality education policy is currently being reviewed.

- The quality of assessment is very good. A range of standardised, diagnostic and screening tests is used to identify and support pupils with different learning needs. The systematic review of standardised test results indicates a strong emphasis on school improvement. Teachers engage in very effective assessment of all pupils through the recording of test results and detailed observations. Some of the teacher-designed assessments for literacy and Mathematics are of a very high quality.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school avails of the services of two resource teachers (one shared), one learning-support teacher and a shared home-school-community liaison teacher. The quality of teaching, learning and pupil management is, in general, very good. Teachers have established very positive relationships with their pupils. A multi-sensory approach to learning is used by all teachers and content is related to pupils' lives and interests. Support is provided to pupils through in-class support, group withdrawal and individual tuition. The initiatives *Literacy Lift Off* and *Reading Recovery* are implemented by the special education team to very good effect.
- The quality of teacher planning for pupils in receipt of support is good. Individual education plans are prepared for all pupils in receipt of support, and are shared with parents. It is recommended that targets be SMART and clearly reflect specialist recommendations. Greater use should be made of running records to inform future teaching.
- The home-school-community liaison teacher has established effective relationships with community groups to support the needs of parents. The development of *Story Sacks* and of a school garden is commended.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M. acknowledges with gratitude the report received following the recent W.S.E. We are pleased to have the many positive and effective practises carried out in the school acknowledged and affirmed. We welcome the advice and encouragement received and will use this to further enhance school improvement.

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 acknowledges the recommendations of the report. In line with the main recommendations the school is currently working on a coherent approach to the development of handwriting, and to developing and enhancing the teaching of poetry in both English and Irish. The inclusion of vocabulary development in oral language lessons has been prioritised. A greater emphasis will be placed on problem solving in Mathematics. We will continue to strive to ensure that we maintain a caring, happy, safe and stimulating learning environment.