

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Ballyduff National School  
Kilmeaden, Co. Waterford  
Uimhir rolla: 13635R**

**Date of inspection: 20 November 2013**



## 1. Introduction

Ballyduff National School is a co-educational, rural primary school in County Waterford, twelve kilometres from Waterford City. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school population has grown in recent years and there are currently 214 pupils enrolled. It has a pre-school, a junior class and a senior class for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Pupil attendance rates are very good. 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 members of the board of management conscientiously attend to duties and share their talents and interests to purposefully support the work of the school.
- The principal leads the school capably, provides very good curriculum leadership and cultivates positive relationships across the school community.
- Parents provide valuable support to various school activities.
- The school building and its surroundings are maintained to a high standard.
- The pupils are cooperative and courteous, and positive in their learning.
- The inclusion and participation of pupils with special educational needs is commendable.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Extra emphasis should be placed on developing the curriculum leadership roles of members of the in-school management team, in line with the school's current priorities.
- Chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fheabhsú sa Ghaeilge, moltar tógáil ar an bhfoclóir atá acu le tuilleadh béime a leagadh ar úsáid briathra agus structúir teanga tríd an scoil. *To improve the pupils' communication skills in Irish, it is advised that their vocabulary be expanded through increased emphasis on the use of verbs and language structures through the school.*

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is effective. The members of the board conscientiously attend to duties and share their talents and interests to purposefully support the work of the school. Accounts of income and expenditure are maintained carefully and records are presented regularly to the board. It is now advised that school accounts are audited or certified annually. It is also recommended that the school's enrolment policy is reviewed.

- The principal leads the school capably and fulfils her duties with high levels of commitment. She provides very good curriculum leadership and cultivates positive relationships across the school community. She is supported by the deputy principal and the special duties post-holders who carry out their assigned responsibilities with dedication. It is now recommended that extra emphasis be placed on developing their curriculum leadership roles, in line with the school's current priorities.
- The school building and its surroundings are maintained to a high standard and orderly learning environments are created to support pupils' learning. A range of appropriate teaching and learning resources is used effectively throughout the school. The ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.
- The quality of communications and relationships with the school community is good and parents receive regular updates on school matters. Parents provide valuable support to various school activities. Responses to parental questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, indicated that the school is well run and that there is a good atmosphere in the school.
- The management of pupils is very good. During the evaluation, the pupils were courteous, mannerly and both confident and positive in their learning. In the questionnaires, the pupils agreed that they feel safe at school and get on well with others.

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

- The quality of school planning is good. A wide range of practical organisational policies is in place. Some features of curricular plans provide clear guidance on various aspects of classroom practice. This worthwhile approach should be further extended and adopted in all curricular plans.
- The school has begun to engage appropriately in school self-evaluation with a particular focus on literacy. Agreed actions are already having a positive impact on pupil learning. Specific targets should now be set for each of the priority areas.
- The quality of teacher planning and preparation is commendable. All teachers provide suitable long-term and short-term planning, as well as detailed monthly progress reports to support their teaching.
- 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. The teachers ensure that suitable resources, strategies and active methodologies are used to engage the pupils meaningfully in their learning. Collaborative learning approaches are used effectively. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used creatively in most classroom settings. To further develop pupil learning, the teachers should plan for and implement more structured approaches to differentiation and the promotion of higher-order thinking skills within the classroom setting, rather than continuing the current model of the withdrawal of groups of pupils for such activities.

- The overall quality of assessment is very good. The teachers employ a wide range of summative assessment records on pupils' attainment across the curriculum. Some very good examples of formative and self-assessment approaches were observed.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith an teanga agus is féidir leis na daltaí aithris a dhéanamh ar raon breá rann, filíochta agus amhrán go muintíneach ag ach leibhéal. Úsáidtear réimse maith straitéisí chun labhairt na ndaltaí a mhealladh agus tá foclóir leathan acu. Chun scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fheabhsú, moltar do mhúinteoirí tógáil ar an bhfoclóir atá ag daltaí le tuilleadh béime a leagadh ar úsáid briathra agus structúr teanga tríd an scoil. Tá an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht ar chaighdeán réasúnta ach b'fhiú fíor-leabhair agus téacsanna grádaithe a úsáid níos leithne.

*The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is of a good standard on the whole. A positive attitude to language is promoted and the pupils are able to recite a good range of rhymes, poetry and songs with confidence at every level. A good range of strategies is used to encourage pupils to speak and the pupils have a wide vocabulary. To improve the pupils' communication skills, the teachers are advised to build on the vocabulary that pupils have by placing further emphasis on the use of verbs and language structures through the school. Reading and writing are of a reasonable standard but it would be worthwhile to use real books and graded texts more widely.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is commendable. Oral language lessons are planned and taught effectively and most pupils express themselves confidently and articulately. A variety of successful structured approaches to the development of reading skills is in evidence. Pupils read with appropriate fluency and accuracy and in the pupil questionnaires, most pupils reported that they feel they are doing well at reading. While novels are used to supplement class readers in all classes, further use is recommended to enhance the pupils' higher-order thinking skills, and to increase interest in reading. The pupils' creative writing skills are developed purposefully across all classes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Suitable emphasis is placed on mental Mathematics in all classes. The pupils are active and appropriate manipulatives and concrete materials are employed purposefully during lessons. Pair work and group work are used effectively in developing skills. There is due emphasis on mathematical language throughout the school and apt links are made to the pupils' own experiences and environment. Commendable work is undertaken on the development of problem-solving strategies in some classes and this good practice should be built upon.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Music is very good. Lessons are well structured and good use is made of resources to actively involve pupils. Appropriate provision is in place for the development of the pupils' literacy skills and for listening and responding to music. The pupils are exposed to a range of musical genres and are provided with opportunities to respond creatively. They sing a variety of songs confidently. Tin-whistle tuition is provided by an external tutor and the pupils perform at numerous school events throughout the year.

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

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is good and the staged approach to support is implemented appropriately throughout the school. The decision to use support teachers for the teaching of Mathematics and English to some classes

means that less time is available for early intervention and prevention in the infant and junior classes. The further development of early intervention and prevention should be prioritised in the next school year. Other support is provided through in-class support activities and through withdrawal in groups and on a one-to-one basis. Lessons in the support settings are generally well structured with a wide range of strategies and resources used effectively. Where in-class support is most effective, there is clear planning around the needs of target pupils. Individualised learning programmes are devised collaboratively and implemented skilfully. In some instances, there is potential for more specific target setting.

- In general, teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the classes for children with an ASD is of a high quality. The teachers are commended for the delivery of a broad curriculum, and a good range of ASD specific teaching approaches is used appropriately. Where practice is particularly effective, the individual needs of pupils are very successfully addressed through the planning for and delivery of very good quality lessons, characterised by a high level of predictability, structure and routine. The pupils acquire effective learning skills and engage enthusiastically in all activities. It is recommended that such good practice be a constant feature of all classes for pupils with an ASD.
- The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is commendable throughout the school. Pupils in classes for children with an ASD join their peers for a suitable range of curricular and social activities. The special needs assistants address the care needs of pupils capably.