An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Dromahane National School,
Dromahane, Mallow, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 13779S

Date of inspection: 7 December 2011
1. **Introduction**

Dromahane National School is a large, rural school, which caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It is situated in the village of Dromahane, which has seen significant growth over the last number of years. Currently, there are 219 pupils on roll and attendance levels are very good. The school maintains strong links with the local community and has a central role in the area it serves. 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 board of management members discharge their duties competently and work conscientiously on behalf of the school.
- The school is led effectively by a capable principal.
- The teachers are dedicated professionals who provide the pupils with a broad curriculum.
- The pupils are well behaved and engage enthusiastically in their learning.
- The quality of pupils’ achievement and of overall learning is very good.
- The parents are very supportive of the school and make a significant contribution.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that additional models of in-class support be provided to support pupils with special educational needs.
- **Moltar go gcuirfí raon níos leithne de léitheoirí éagsúla ar fáil agus go dtabharfaí breis deiseanna do na daltaí scriobh i réimse seánraí.**
- **It is recommended that a greater range of Irish reading material be provided for pupils and that they be afforded more opportunities to write in a range of genre.**

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The chairperson convenes meetings regularly and meets frequently with the principal. The financial accounts are carefully managed and certified independently. Board members are assigned specific duties, which are carried out diligently. In order to further develop school self-evaluation the board is advised to engage further with the policy development process.
• The school is led effectively by a capable principal. He fosters a positive working relationship with staff, parents and board members. The acting deputy principal collaborates closely with him to successfully lead and manage the work of the school.

• The school is well equipped with a variety of resources. The board, with the support of Department grants, has invested in a wide range of resources which are appropriately deployed to enhance pupils’ learning. Much of the school accommodation is temporary. While accommodation is inadequate for the large number of pupils on roll, effective use is made of all available space. The board employs ancillary staff members and are very appreciative of their contribution to the work of the school.

• This is an open, welcoming school and effective links are maintained with the parents. The responses to questionnaires completed by parents as part of this evaluation indicate a very high level of satisfaction with how the school is run. The school makes effective use of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment report templates for reporting on pupils’ progress and achievement. The school has an active parents’ association, which contributes significantly.

• The management of pupils is very good. The pupils are well behaved and engage enthusiastically in their learning. They display a positive attitude to learning. This is reflected strongly in responses to the pupils’ questionnaires. Throughout the school, classroom atmosphere and pupil-teacher interactions are positive.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation processes is good. The teachers have formulated a wide range of good quality curricular and administrative policies in collaboration with the relevant partners. These plans have been ratified by the board and are reviewed regularly. A planning diary has been drafted to guide this review process. Aspects of the enrolment policy as articulated should be amended.

• All teachers carefully prepare both long-term and short-term plans. An agreed template has been designed to facilitate this work. Monthly progress records are maintained and the principal retains copies.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

• The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. The teachers mediate the curriculum in a stimulating and interesting manner using a wide variety of methodologies and approaches. In general lessons are well structured and paced and they address the learning needs of pupils. In classrooms where teaching and learning was particularly effective, pupils were provided with valuable opportunities to work in groups and to actively participate in their learning. It is recommended that these approaches be extended.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Pupils are taught a definite language input. Language games and pair work are organised to enable them acquire and use the new language. To raise pupils’ standards further the teachers are advised to consider teaching aspects of the curriculum through Irish. It is also recommended that a greater variety of reading material be provided and that pupils be given further opportunities to write in a range of genre.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. A good emphasis is placed on poetry throughout the school. Among the very good practices observed in the teaching of reading was the focused development of sight vocabulary and phonological awareness. Due attention is placed on handwriting and pupils are encouraged to develop a good cursive style of writing. At particular class levels the provision of further opportunities for pupils to write in a range of genre will greatly enhance their learning.

- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Teachers provide purposeful mathematical activities which are well supported with a wide variety of resources. A broad range of concrete materials is effectively used to introduce and consolidate concepts in all classes. There is clear evidence of progressive development of curriculum strands. Placing further emphasis on relating mathematical activities to pupils’ experiences and environment is encouraged. Appropriate attention is focused on teaching mathematical language. The further development of problem solving strategies is recommended to augment current practice. Results of standardised tests indicate pupils are achieving high standards generally.

- The standard of teaching and learning in Geography is very good throughout the school. Lessons are well presented and pupils are skilfully motivated through the use of stimulating resources. A variety of active learning methodologies are successfully employed to stimulate pupil interest and learning. A wide variety of strands and strand units were observed during the evaluation period. To augment current practice, it is advised that a greater number of resources be available in all classrooms. Interactive white boards are judiciously used to introduce new learning opportunities and to consolidate learning.

- Pupil attainment is regularly assessed through a combination of formal and informal assessment strategies. Individual pupil profiles are carefully maintained on each pupil, containing samples of work and test results. Standardised test results indicate that pupils are making very good progress in literacy and numeracy in accordance with their abilities. Consideration might now be given to extending the use of diagnostic testing.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The learning support / resource teachers work conscientiously in close collaboration with the mainstream teachers to cater for the special needs of the pupils. Individual Education Plans are prepared carefully. For the most part, pupils are withdrawn from their classrooms to receive supplementary support. The extension of in-class support models is recommended.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM of Dromahane N.S. along with the staff and wider community wish to thank the DES Inspectors for their courtesy and professionalism during the recent WSE.

For the staff in particular it was a positive experience and we greatly appreciate the fact that the report affirms the great work being done by all involved in the school.

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 BOM of Dromahane welcomes the findings and recommendations contained in the report and will take them on board.

To this end we have, since the draft report, engaged a facilitator from the SESS to advise us on the best models of in class support we can provide for pupils with SEN.