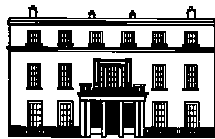


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Callystown Mixed National School
Clogherhead, County Louth
Uimhir rolla: 14252G

Date of inspection: 16 November 2015



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

1. Introduction

Callystown Mixed National School, situated in Clogherhead, County Louth, caters for boys and girls from infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh. In recent years, the school has expanded rapidly and, currently, there are 319 pupils on roll. Overall attendance levels are very good. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream-class settings and three support-teaching settings. During the whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was evaluated.

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 **key findings**:

- A positive code of behaviour is in place that is reflected in the exemplary management of pupils throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate very high levels of interest and enthusiasm.
- The standard of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in all subjects evaluated was very good.
- School self-evaluation is of a very high standard, being guided by continuous reflection and conversation on the efficacy of particular interventions.
- High-quality leadership is in evidence resulting in a nurturing school culture in which the school staff display a deep commitment to the pastoral care and holistic development of pupils.
- Very positive and productive relations have been established with the school community.
- The quality of whole-school planning is very good. Teachers' individual short-term planning is clear in terms of the delineation of content, but there is scope to make more explicit provision for differentiation.
- Ar an iomlán tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán an-mhaith. Tá scóip le béim a chur ar scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach sa Ghaeilge ar bhonn níos rialta. *The overall standard of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. There is scope for more regular emphasis to be placed on creative writing in Irish.*
- Interventions for pupils with additional learning needs are very well organised, facilitate active hands-on experiences for pupils, and are resulting in very positive learning outcomes.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a common approach to individual teacher short-term planning be established, with due regard for the explicit identification of differentiated learning objectives to accommodate the full range of pupil ability in each class.

- Moltar clár scríbhneoireachta córasach a chur i bhfeidhm chun scileanna na ndaltaí sa scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach a threisiú a thuilleadh ar bhonn scoile uile sa Ghaeilge. *It is recommended that a systematic approach be implemented to develop pupils' creative writing skills in Irish further on a whole-school basis.*
- The school's decision to partially deploy a support teacher to deliver aspects of mainstream-classroom instruction should be reviewed so as to accord with the terms of Circular Sp Ed 02/05.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board performs its duties in a collaborative and reflective manner. Meetings are convened at appropriate intervals, detailed minutes are maintained and accounts are audited externally. The board is highly commended for its proactive role in planning for the upgrade and extension of accommodation to cater for the growing number of pupils enrolling in the school.
- The work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal displays a clear vision for the development of the school and ensures that there is a positive and nurturing school climate. His leadership is characterised by strategic planning and action, and effective curriculum leadership. He is supported in a capable and committed manner by the in-school management team; the team attends conscientiously to a broad range of duties. Commendably, the schedules of duties and responsibilities attaching to particular posts are reviewed annually. It is advised that the curricular aspects of individual posts be strengthened to impact more directly on the identified teaching and learning priorities of the school. All of the teachers, who completed a questionnaire as part of the evaluation process, agreed that the school is well run and that there is a good atmosphere.
- The building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. A very affirming and visually stimulating learning environment has been created. Classrooms and corridors are colourful, print rich and number rich, with many attractive displays of pupils' work celebrated across a range of curricular areas. Classrooms present as ordered learning environments and are successful in providing pupils with valuable support in their learning. The school is very well resourced, and information and communication technology (ICT) is used creatively and skilfully to support teaching and learning.
- A positive code of behaviour is in place that is reflected in the exemplary management of pupils throughout the school, as observed during this evaluation. The school staff display a deep commitment to the pastoral care and holistic development of pupils. Pupils demonstrate very high levels of interest and enthusiasm. Responses to questionnaires indicate that most pupils like this school.
- There is evidence of very positive relations and communication with the whole-school community. The committed and active parents' association provides valuable support. Regular opportunities are provided for parents and members of the wider community to become involved in the life of the school. In discussion, very high levels of satisfaction were expressed by parents' representatives with regard to the quality of education provided. This high level of satisfaction is corroborated in the questionnaire responses provided by parents. Almost all parents surveyed agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and they are happy with the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good and bears witness to the considerable and sustained effort by members of the school community as well as the very effective leadership of the process by the principal. Comprehensive organisational plans impact beneficially on day-to-day activities. The element of the enrolment policy that provides for the potential deferral of enrolment of pupils with special educational needs should be amended to reflect the very positive inclusive practice enacted by the school. Curricular plans are contextualised suitably and provide very clear guidance for individual teacher planning. The school is highly commended for the strategic and reflective manner in which curriculum policies are reviewed and revised. Going forward, all school plans and policies should be signed on ratification and include the dates of anticipated review.
- Engagement with the self-evaluation process is highly commendable. The approach has been very systematic and clear plans for numeracy, literacy and Irish have been developed. In line with best practice, these are regularly informed by whole-school reflection and discussion. Interpretation and analysis of baseline data are thorough, resulting in appropriate targets and actions for improvement that are benefiting pupils' learning.
- All teachers prepare detailed long-term and short-term plans that are specific in terms of the delineation of content. As means to further enhance this work, it is recommended that a common approach to short-term planning be established, with due regard for the explicit identification of differentiated learning objectives to accommodate the full range of pupil ability in each class.
- 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

Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán an-mhaith. Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach ann i leith na Gaeilge. Aithrisíonn na daltaí raon leathan de rainn agus d'amhráin go muiníneach. Tá sé ar a gcumas ceisteanna a thuiscint agus a fhreagairt. Cuirtear béim inmholta ar shealbhú foclóra agus léiríonn na daltaí go bhfuil stór leathan foclóra acu. Cuirtear béim chuí ar theanga a mhúineadh trí mhodhanna teagaisc gníomhacha agus cruthaitheacha a úsáid ach i mionlach na ranganna ba chóir tuilleadh deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí cleachtadh a dhéanamh ar úsáid an fhoclóra nua. Tá léitheoireacht na ndaltaí bunaithe go príomha ar ábhar na dtéacsleabhar; tá an léitheoireacht seo ar chaighdeán maith. I ranganna áirithe, baintear dea-úsáid as leabhair mhóra chun scileanna léitheoireachta a ullmhú go héifeachtach. Bheadh sé tairbheach anois taithí léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a leathnú tríd an scoil agus úrséalta simplí agus áiseanna comhaimseartha a chur san áireamh. Tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta feidhmiúla le moladh agus tá samplaí maithe de scríbhneoireacht phearsanta curtha ar fáil. Moltar clár scríbhneoireachta córasach a chur i bhfeidhm chun scileanna sa scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach a threisiú a thuilleadh ar bhonn scoile uile.

Overall, teaching and learning in Irish are of a very good standard. It is evident that there is a positive disposition towards Irish. Pupils recite a broad range of poems and songs confidently. They are able to ask and answer questions. A praiseworthy emphasis is placed on the acquisition of vocabulary and pupils demonstrate that they have a broad vocabulary. A suitable emphasis is placed on the teaching of language through active and creative teaching methodologies, but in a minority of classes additional opportunities

should be given to pupils to practise the new vocabulary. The pupils' reading is based primarily on the textbook; this reading is of a good standard. In some classes, very good use is made of big books to prepare reading skills effectively. It would be beneficial now to broaden pupils' reading experiences throughout the school and to include simple novels and contemporary resources. The standard of functional writing is praiseworthy and good examples of pupils' personal writing were available. It is recommended that a systematic approach be implemented to develop pupils' creative writing skills further on a whole-school basis.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Pupils display very good oral-language competencies. Reading standards are high across the school and the findings from questionnaires indicate that most pupils have positive views of their reading abilities. Particular strengths in the teaching of reading include a structured approach to the teaching of phonics and spelling, and the use of levelled texts and novels. A range of literacy interventions, such as *Reading Recovery* and *Literacy Lift Off*, is implemented to very good effect. Well-stocked classroom libraries support pupils' motivation for reading. A very effective whole-school, process approach to writing across the breadth of genres is implemented. The quality of pupils' written work in terms of content, handwriting and presentation is very good overall, and excellent work was observed in many instances. Teachers monitor written work regularly and with care; there is scope in some instances, however, for teachers to give more focused formative feedback on pupils' written work as part of the process.
- Teaching and learning in Mathematics are of a very high quality. The policy on Mathematics is very well designed. In planning to further enrich provision, more use of mathematics trails and mathematics investigations should be implemented. Observed lessons were structured very well with appropriate provision for conceptual development. Commendably, content was well contextualised within the experience and environment of the pupils. The school is very well resourced with a broad range of suitable resources to develop pupils' mathematical concepts. The focus on problem solving and regular use of teacher-designed tests is paying clear dividends. It was observed that very good provision was in place for the discussion of problem-solving techniques and associated plenary sessions.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is highly praiseworthy. The SPHE programme is delivered very effectively in both discrete and integrated contexts. Attractive displays of specific SPHE-illustrative materials and pupils' work provide valuable assistance in informing and affirming pupils. A range of appropriate learning methodologies including pair work, group work and circle-time activities is used very skilfully to encourage pupils' expression of their views. Very good systems are in place to cultivate a positive school and classroom climate that fosters pupils' health and well-being. Particular emphasis is placed on the implementation of anti-bullying strategies. Responses to pupil, parent and teacher questionnaires demonstrate a very good awareness of the school's protocols in relation to anti-bullying.
- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement was found to be very good in this school. Teachers prepare very carefully for their work. Lessons are well structured, appropriately resourced and very effectively paced. A wide range of methodologies is used very skilfully and knowledgeably to facilitate the active participation of pupils. Overall, very good assessment practices are in operation. Pupils were observed to be very engaged in their learning and they present their work to a very high standard. Teachers' questioning skills are very good generally. Teachers display a wide range of skills and abilities across a range of curriculum areas, with very notable and creative provision for Music, Visual Arts and ICT. The board should review current

practice in its employment of an external tutor to provide for the gymnastics strand of the Physical Education curriculum.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is of a high quality. A variety of appropriate assessment data is used to identify pupils for support. As appropriate, an individual education plan (IEP), or individual pupil learning programme (IPLP), is drafted for each child in receipt of supplementary teaching; these plans are clear on the scope and nature of support to be provided. In some cases, target setting should be more specific. There is also potential for including detail in IEPs as to how parents can best support their child's learning. It is recommended that all parents receive a copy of the IEP. Support teachers write detailed daily plans to guide their support work across the fields of numeracy, literacy and social skills. It is recommended that there be a common approach to planning within short-term contexts, as outlined in the *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000). While there are benefits to the practice of special education teachers planning collaboratively each Friday, it is advised that time allocations for such planning be reviewed to accord with the provisions of Circular Sp Ed 02/05.
- Learning-support teaching is provided in a very affirming and interactive manner. Teachers make very good use of resources and well-structured activities to stimulate pupils' interest and motivation. Pupils spoke confidently about their learning and engaged very enthusiastically in learning tasks. Content was observed to be suitably connected to the life experience of the pupils. Teachers monitor pupil involvement in lessons carefully and good assessment approaches are in operation. A variety of intervention models is used in a skilful and purposeful manner; these include in-class support, withdrawal and group-support sessions. These interventions are very well organised, facilitate active hands-on experiences and are resulting in very positive learning outcomes. The school's decision to partially deploy a support teacher to deliver aspects of mainstream-classroom instruction should be reviewed; school practice should accord with the terms of Circular Sp Ed 02/05.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Callystown National School welcomes the very positive report which is a strong affirmation of the work of the school.

The Board is pleased that the report recognises the school's strengths in relation to the dedication and professionalism of staff, the high-quality leadership and efficacy of management, the inclusive and welcoming culture and atmosphere, the behaviour and enthusiasm of pupils, the standard of teaching, learning and attainment in the school, the stimulating and well-maintained physical environment of the school, the supportive and active Parents' Council and school community, and the school's high standard and effective engagement with the process of School Self Evaluation.

The Board also welcomes the very positive feedback from parents, pupils and teachers expressed in questionnaires during the course of the evaluation.

Part B: 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 of the report and are committed to implementing these as part of the school's ongoing self evaluation and planning.

In relation to the school's practice of partially deploying a support teacher for the purpose of delivering elements of the Literacy and Numeracy programme to a group of 14 pupils from a large class in an "out of class" setting, the school has redeployed this support teacher to an "in class" setting to accord with circular 02/05.

