

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Peadar & Pól
Ballon, County Carlow
Uimhir rolla: 14837L

Date of inspection: 09 May 2011



1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Peadar & Pól is a full vertical co-educational primary school in Ballon, Co. Carlow. The acting Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin is its patron. Two hundred and thirty five pupils are enrolled in eight mainstream classrooms and attendance is very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- Board members carry out their duties diligently.
- The school principal, in-school management team and staff are committed to the development of optimal teaching and learning opportunities for all pupils.
- Parents actively support the work of the school.
- Pupils display self-confidence and show regard for their school community and its environs. An ethos of mutual respect contributes to a positive learning environment.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the four curriculum areas evaluated is very good.
- Good practice is evident in the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a policy which promotes teacher mobility within mainstream and between mainstream and special education settings be devised and implemented.
- Further involvement of parents in the formulation of school policies is recommended.
- It is recommended that the assessment policy be used to ensure a systematic whole-school approach to the assessment and recording of pupils' progress.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted. It meets regularly and suitable minutes are recorded. Board members are diligent in the execution of their duties. The board ratifies all school policies. A commendable system ensures that policies are reviewed on a cyclical basis. To enhance this good work, it is recommended that a policy which promotes teacher mobility within mainstream and between mainstream and special education settings be devised and implemented. It is noteworthy that the board has given due consideration to how the school can best support more able pupils. The management of financial procedures is undertaken in line with Section 18(1) of the

Education Act 1998. Board members avail of training provided by the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association.

- The school's dedicated principal demonstrates excellent organisational skills. He leads the whole-school planning process and is instrumental in the implementation of the school's self-evaluation strategy. He successfully nurtures a positive school climate. He manages and supports staff effectively and is committed to the pastoral and educational welfare of all pupils.
- The principal is ably supported by a focussed in-school management team whose members carry out their assigned duties diligently. This team concentrates on school development and improvement. They contribute effectively to building and sustaining a positive school climate. Post-holder duties are reviewed yearly to meet the changing needs of the school.
- The school is assisted by a dynamic parents' association which is actively involved in extra curricular activities, liturgical events and fundraising. Written reports, including the results of standardised tests, along with annual parent-teacher meetings, inform parents of their child's progress. Parents recognise the good work undertaken throughout the school with regard to teaching and learning. Results of the parent questionnaire indicate that all parents are happy with the school and most parents feel that their child is treated fairly.
- Pupils partake in many stimulating school initiatives. They display self-confidence in discussing these projects and general topics of personal interest. They show regard for their school community and its environs with many fine examples of their work exhibited. An ethos of mutual respect contributes to a positive learning environment.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- There is a good standard of planning and self-evaluation in relation to key organisational and curriculum areas. The board is actively involved in the development of organisational policies and in the review of curriculum policies. Parents can access school policies on the school's informative website. Further involvement of parents in the formulation of school policies is recommended.
- The whole-school plan is mindful of the school context and the individual needs of pupils. Curriculum plans are clearly structured. Agreed approaches for the implementation of each curriculum area, together with a summary of the work to be completed at every class level is outlined consistently. A comprehensive assessment policy has been formulated. It is recommended that this assessment policy be used to ensure a systematic whole-school approach to the assessment and recording of pupils' progress.
- There is a good standard of individual classroom planning. Long-term and short-term plans reflect the strands and strand units of the primary curriculum. Good work has begun in the majority of classrooms in relation to differentiation for pupils with special educational needs. The extension of this good practice to all classes is advised with particular emphasis on those pupils who work from a parallel curriculum in a particular setting. Common planning templates have recently been introduced and prove successful in those classrooms where they are used. Consideration should be given to using these templates in all settings.
- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child*

Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers are committed to the development of optimal teaching and learning opportunities for all pupils. Textbooks are used thoughtfully to support lesson presentation along with carefully selected resources. A wide range of methodologies is employed with an emphasis on child-centred learning alongside more traditional whole-class teaching.
- Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge, agus tá caighdeán oiriúnach á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Baintear úsáid as an nGaeilge mar mheán teagaisc i rith na gceachtanna Gaeilge. Aithrisíonn agus canann na daltaí dánta agus amhráin go cumasach sa chuid is mó de na ranganna. B'fhiú tuilleadh béime a leagan ar an obair seo i ranganna eile chun cumas tuisceana agus cainte na ndaltaí a threisiú. Ní mór breis béime a chur ar chothú na fíorchumarsáide sa Ghaeilge. Chuige sin, moltar go ndéanfaí deimhin de go mbíonn tréimhse chinnte chumarsáide i ngach ceacht comhrá. Léann fórmhór na ndaltaí le líofacht oiriúnach agus díreáir aird chuif ar dhea-fhoghraíocht a fhorbairt. Cé go bhfuil dea-saothar scríbhneoireachta ar taispeáint, is scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil is mó a chleachtar. Moltar plean cuimsitheach do phróiseas na scríbhneoireachta a dheardh agus a chur i bhfeidhm chun níos mó deiseanna scríbhneoireachta a sholáthar do na daltaí.

A positive attitude to Irish is nurtured, and a suitable standard is achieved in teaching and learning. Irish is used as the medium of instruction during lessons. Pupils in most classes recite and sing poems and songs competently. More emphasis should be placed on this work in other classes to enrich pupils' understanding and oral capabilities. A greater emphasis should be placed on fostering authentic conversation in Irish. To this end, teachers are asked to ensure that each conversational lesson contains a distinct conversational phase. Most pupils read with appropriate fluency and due attention is paid to the development of accurate pronunciation. While some fine samples of writing are displayed, functional writing is generally practiced. It is recommended that a comprehensive plan for process writing be devised and implemented to provide pupils with a greater variety of writing tasks.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. Teachers create appropriate contexts to develop pupils' oral language skills and pupils generally communicate competently. In order to enhance the richness of their expressive skills, it is recommended that the range of oral language curriculum objectives and contexts be addressed regularly, on a school wide basis as is outlined in the school's English policy. A variety of effective methodologies is used to stimulate pupils' interest in reading, and laudable attention is placed in promoting reading skills. Pupils' phonological and phonemic awareness are fostered purposefully and good use is made of a broad range of differentiated reading material. Through the pupil questionnaires, most pupils report that they are doing well at reading. Pupils write regularly and many fine examples of their independent work are displayed attractively. Pupils are encouraged to contribute this work to the school's website.
- Provision for Mathematics is of a high quality. Commendable practice includes the consistent use of manipulatives and information and communication technology to

support pupils in the development of mathematical skills. Good standards of pupil achievement are noted and most demonstrate a well-developed ability to apply concepts previously addressed. Due emphasis is placed on the acquisition of mathematical language. Standardised assessment outcomes are used productively to target pupils in need of additional support. To enhance the quality of provision, it is advised that problem-solving strategies be more incrementally developed. In their questionnaire responses, most pupils believed that they are doing well at Mathematics.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is good. A range of strategies such as hot seating, role play, puppetry and games is carefully employed. Pupils have suitable learning opportunities to explore and make drama, and to reflect on the process. Lesson content is appropriate to the class level and commendable emphasis is placed on pupil participation. As a consequence, pupils engage with interest and enthusiasm. The development of social, language and communication skills are afforded due attention. Pupils respond creatively to the stimulus provided and demonstrate their enjoyment of the drama process.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Good practice is evident in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The Individual Education Planning process involves all the partners and targets are reviewed twice yearly. Support is provided mainly in-class and the special education team is currently focussing on the development of an agreed planning process to maximise the benefit for those pupils who are in need of supplementary teaching.
- Both formal and informal contact is facilitated between the special education setting and class teachers in relation to individual pupil progress. Focussed language-support interventions are provided for newcomer pupils. Well-structured lessons ensure that pupils make appropriate progress at their own level in all special education settings.

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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 welcomes and accepts the inspectors' very positive evaluation report on our school. We thank the inspectors for the professional way they interacted with the Board, parents, pupils and teachers. We intend to use the report's findings as part of our system of self-evaluation and continuous 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 has begun a process of policy review with the involvement of parents being central to this.

The school policy on assessment will be reviewed at the next staff meeting.

The Gaeilge policy is currently being reviewed with an emphasis on poetry and conversation.