

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Drumlease National School**  
**Dromahair, County Leitrim**  
**Roll number: 15382B**

**Date of inspection: 6 June 2013**



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

## 1. Introduction

Drumlease National School is a vertical, co-educational primary school situated in the village of Dromahair. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. The 122 pupils are distributed across five mainstream classrooms, four of which are dual-grade. Attendance levels are very good overall. During this whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Geography was inspected. 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 main strengths of the work of the school:

- The board of management works in a dedicated and purposeful manner and the chairperson is a regular and supportive school visitor.
- The principal and teachers are deeply committed to the pupils' wellbeing and education and manifest a very strong work ethic.
- In-school management is of a very high standard.
- The school provides a very attractive, well-maintained and richly resourced learning environment.
- Whole-school management of pupils is of a high standard and the quality of support provided for them is praiseworthy.
- The quality of whole-school planning is commendable.
- The quality of teaching and learning is strong in English, Mathematics and Geography.
- Home-school communication is very effective and parents are very supportive.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Sa Ghaeilge, b'fhiú scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt níos córasaí ó rang go rang agus monatóireacht níos cruinne a dhéanamh ar a gnóthachtáil. (*In Irish, pupils' speaking skills need to be developed more systematically from class to class and their achievement monitored more precisely*).
- It is recommended that an e-learning plan be used to guide the development of digital literacy skills.
- It is recommended that in-class support programmes be developed to facilitate team teaching.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management works in a dedicated and purposeful manner. It is properly constituted, meetings are convened regularly, minutes are maintained carefully and accounts have been audited recently. The chairperson is a regular and supportive school visitor. School refurbishment work and general maintenance and presentation are highly commended. Communication with the school community is very good and re-activation of the web site would enhance this even further. The board should consider disseminating further information about its good work by providing an annual report to parents.

- While compliance with departmental circulars and guidelines is generally very good, morning assembly should align more closely with the direction provided in Circular 11/95.
- There are five mainstream teachers and a learning-support teacher. In addition, two support teachers—one-based elsewhere and one part-time—visit the school. The principal and teachers are deeply committed to their pupils' wellbeing and education and manifest a very strong work ethic. Ancillary staff—the secretary and caretaker/cleaner—contribute very positively to the overall success of the school.
- The in-school management team works very successfully. The principal combines his administrative and teaching duties very effectively. He visits classrooms regularly and uses school assemblies very beneficially to involve and encourage pupils. The day-to-day operation of the school is very efficient and very good teamwork and collaboration are fostered. The deputy principal and special duties teacher provide very valuable support and their input is instrumental in furthering school development and effective organisational practices. Other staff lead and contribute to various initiatives and co-operate very positively with management.
- The school provides a very attractive, well-maintained and richly resourced learning environment. It has extensive information and communications technologies (ICT). Well-stocked classroom libraries are available and the establishment of a central library is also intended. The addition of more Irish-language texts would be beneficial. Classroom and support-teaching accommodation is very well presented and child centred. Corridor displays are exemplary. The grounds are very pleasant with clearly defined play areas and a well-maintained garden.
- Whole-school management of pupils is of a high standard. In most classrooms, there is very good focus on effective listener/speaker relationships and social interactions. Teachers interact with pupils in a very warm and affirming manner. In questionnaire responses, the majority of pupils confirmed that a safe, secure and happy environment is provided for them. Some of the response patterns—for example, in respect of opportunities to work in groups and to access computers regularly—warrant further discussion at school level.
- Very clear channels of communication have been established with parents and the wider school community. Amongst other strategies, regular newsletters, a useful prospectus and text alerts for parents are provided. In addition, there is a comprehensive induction workshop for new infants and parents are welcome to attend monthly assemblies.
- The parents' association is very supportive, assisting with fundraising, school-support and parent-support activities. Members are satisfied with how the school provides for the pupils in its care. The general parent body is very supportive and—according to questionnaire responses garnered during the inspection process—positively disposed towards the school. Most parents indicated that they are happy with school discipline, atmosphere, pupil safety, and the quality of teaching and learning.

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

- The quality of planning is commendable. The school plan includes policy statements on each curricular area together with a wide range of clear organisational procedures. Parents were involved in the development of some organisational policies. In the curricular policies, there is a need to delineate the content to be taught at each class level to facilitate greater progression in teaching and learning as pupils proceed from class to class. It is recommended that an e-learning plan be used to guide the development of digital literacy skills.
- All teachers prepare conscientiously for their work and the quality of their classroom planning is good overall. While evident in many instances, it is recommended that all teachers identify learning objectives across the curriculum in their short-term planning. It would be beneficial to have an agreed framework for monthly progress reports.
- Teachers show willingness to engage in self-reflection and there is very good commitment to continuous professional development. In accordance with Circular 39/2012, teachers intend, with the assistance of the board of management and input from the wider school community, to publish an improvement plan for literacy in the near future.
- 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 and learning is commendable. Observed lesson input was skilful and relevant. In most instances there is very clear focus on learning outcomes. In particular, provision for English, Mathematics and Geography is strong. Pupils are enabled to engage actively in a range of relevant and interesting learning opportunities and there is good focus on project-work.
- Tá caighdeán sásúil á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaím na Gaeilge. Sonraíodh samplaí de chleachtais mhaithe i rith na meastóireachta: úsáid ábhar léirithe, obair bheirte, rólímirt agus amhráin san áireamh. Tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaithe daltaí abairtí simplí a chumadh ach ní mór, afách, a chinntiú go bhfuil forbairt chórasach ag teacht ar an ábhar teanga atá á mhúineadh ó rang go rang. B'fhiú scrúdaithe caighdeánaithe a úsáid agus monatóireacht níos cruinne a dhéanamh ar ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go torthúil i gcuid de na ranganna agus moltar an deachleachtas seo a leathnú ar fud na scoile. Cuirtear ábhair léitheoireachta oiriúnacha ar fáil agus léann formhór na ndaltaí le cruinneas agus le tuiscint. Déantar monatóireacht chuí ar scríbhneoireacht na ndaltaí ach moltar anois deiseanna breise saor-chumadóireachta a sholáthar dóibh ó rang go rang.
- *A satisfactory standard in the teaching and learning of Irish is being achieved. Good examples of practice were evident during the evaluation, including the use of visual resources, pair work, role play and songs. The majority of pupils are able to form simple*

*sentences but there is need to ensure that there is a systematic development of the language content taught from class to class. Standardised testing should be used and there should be closer monitoring of pupils' achievement. Pupils' listening skills are developed successfully in a number of classes and it is recommended that this good practice be extended throughout the school. Appropriate reading material is provided and the majority of pupils read with understanding and accuracy. Appropriate monitoring of pupils' writing occurs but it is now recommended that additional opportunities for free writing be provided from class to class.*

- Provision for English is commendable and standardised tests indicate that pupils' overall attainment is very good. In the junior classes the development of phonological skills receives consistent attention and large-format books are used very well. Throughout the school, pupils display proficient reading standards and there is a good focus on the development of comprehension skills. The school should consider introducing additional whole-school reading initiatives such as *Drop Everything and Read*. The promotion of emergent writing is very good and as the pupils progress through the school they produce high-quality writing across a variety of genres and for a variety of audiences. Some editing and re-drafting of work occurs in the senior classes; this might be extended throughout the school. While pupils' handwriting is generally satisfactory, the introduction of cursive handwriting at an earlier stage should be considered. Pupils engage confidently in class discussion. However, as already identified by the school in its self-evaluation records, the provision of a specific skills-based oral language programme with clear learning objectives would develop their competencies further. The pupils' ability to recite and compose poetry is highly commended.
- Provision for Mathematics is strong. During the evaluation, lessons included clear explanation supported by effective use of a range of resources and good consolidation of understanding of concepts. The focus on oral and mental mathematical work, early years' mathematics work, manipulation of concrete resources and collaborative learning activities are commendable practices. Very good standards are achieved in standardised tests. To build further on this effective work, it would be worthwhile to consider incorporating more daily problem-solving at all class levels.
- Work in Geography is of a very high quality. Care for the environment is well established and is reflected in the success achieved in the environmental *Green Schools Programme*. Pupils' sense of space and place is developed incrementally through the study of a range of human and natural environments. Pupils are able to use and construct maps confidently. They are afforded regular opportunities to develop their investigative skills through exploration of the local environment. The whole-school plan should be extended to include a defined programme of local geography for each class level. The potential of ICT to inform learning in this subject should be explored.
- Assessment practices are effective. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly using a broad range of screening and diagnostic tests. In addition, teachers monitor pupils' work closely and administer teacher-designed tests regularly. Some examples of very good practice in the use of assessment for learning are evident. To enhance this good work, it is advised that the assessment policy be extended to include assessment for learning.

## 6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with additional and special educational needs is commendable. There is very good organisation on the continuum of support at a whole-school level. Education plans specify clear targets based on identified learning needs. Frequent informal meetings are conducted with parents and with class teachers. In most instances, formal bi-annual reviews are conducted and documented appropriately; this should occur in all instances.
- Interactions observed in the supplementary teaching settings were very affirming and encouraging of the pupils. Learning environments are highly appropriate. In most lessons observed, teaching was adapted skilfully to meet the specific learning needs of the pupils. Currently, support teaching is organised primarily on a withdrawal basis. It is recommended that in-class support programmes be developed to facilitate team teaching.
- The quality of pastoral care is very good in this school. The overall climate is positive and child friendly and this is reflected in the confident attitudes of most pupils.
- Pupils are facilitated to part-take in a very wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. These include *Green-Schools* and *Active School* programmes, art exhibitions, sporting competitions, quizzes and choir events. Financial contributions from parents towards external tutors should be discontinued.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management of Drumlease N.S. welcomes this hugely positive WSE report. It would like to acknowledge the cordial and professional manner in which the evaluation was carried out by the inspectors of the Department of Education.

We are pleased that the report recognises the excellent work being done in the school. It affirms the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of our teachers, pupils, parents, ancillary staff, board of management and the wider school community.

We welcome the findings of the report in regards to the high standards of teaching and learning, particularly in literacy, numeracy and geography. We also welcome the acknowledgement of the high standard of in-school management, the quality of support provided for pupils and the overall positive environment we have worked hard to achieve 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 Board welcomes the recommendations contained in the report and has begun the process of reviewing these in detail. These will be incorporated into our Three Year School Development Plan and dealt with as part of the school self-evaluation process.

Since the Whole School Evaluation, school staff have undertaken professional development in a wide variety of areas including assessment for learning and developing a school e-learning plan.

The school has requested the services of the PDST in relation to the recommendations made as regards Gaeilge, as we strive to make improvements in the area outlined in the report.

The SEN team are currently developing in-class support programmes to facilitate team teaching.