

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Michael's National School
Ballyduff, Co. Waterford
Uimhir rolla: 15540Q

Date of inspection: 17 September 2012



1. Introduction

St. Michael's NS is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school in west County Waterford. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are currently 135 pupils enrolled and attendance rates are very good. 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, the parents and the parents' association are firmly committed to supporting the school
- The principal is an effective leader and promotes a culture of teamwork and partnership amongst all members of the school community.
- The staff of the school is committed, hardworking and dedicated to the holistic development of the pupils.
- The pupils are managed effectively and are confident and positive in their learning.
- The quality of school planning is very good and the school engages productively in self-evaluation.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good across the curricular areas inspected.
- Commendable support is provided for pupils with special educational needs.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school's existing model of withdrawing pupils with special educational needs for learning support should be expanded to include further opportunities for in-class support.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management works diligently and productively to support the school. A strong sense of shared purpose and a spirit of collaboration underpin its work.
- The effective leadership of the principal is characterised by a commitment to achieving high standards across the curriculum. Whole-school planning is led with clear focus and purpose and she has succeeded in promoting a culture of teamwork and partnership amongst all members of the school community. The quality of work of the in-school management team is highly commendable. Appropriate duties have been specified clearly and are being fulfilled with dedication.

- The quality of management of resources is very good. The teachers are deployed appropriately with due consideration given to the needs of pupils. Ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth functioning of the school. The school building and its environs are maintained to a very high standard. A wide range of resources is used efficiently to support teaching and learning.
- Effective procedures have been developed to ensure regular and meaningful communication with parents and the wider community. The parents, along with the active parents' association, provide valuable practical and financial support to the school, and are encouraged to participate in many school events and activities. The questionnaire results indicate that almost all parents feel welcomed in the school and are happy with the school.
- The pupils are managed effectively and are cooperative and courteous. They are confident and positive in their learning. The questionnaires administered to pupils demonstrate that most pupils are happy in their school and all feel that they get on well with the other children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is highly commendable. A range of clear organisational policies has been developed collaboratively. Curriculum plans are of a high quality and are successful in delineating content and skills. They impact effectively on provision for pupils and on their learning.
- The school engages productively in the self-evaluation process and development priorities are selected judiciously in planning for improvement. The school is advised to continue this productive approach with future priorities.
- All teachers provide appropriate and detailed long-term and short-term planning to guide and support their work, and monthly progress records are maintained carefully.
- 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 overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are lively, engaging and well structured. The teachers use a range of approaches and methodologies effectively, including whole-class teaching, collaborative group and pair work as well as independent tasks. The quality of the pupils' learning and their participation in lessons is highly commendable. They present as motivated and enthusiastic learners and achieve laudable standards.
- The teachers employ a comprehensive range of assessment modes including checklists, teacher-designed tests and the maintenance of samples of work. There is highly effective analysis of assessment data at whole-school level. In the parent questionnaires, a majority of parents responded that they were happy with their children's progress in school.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith agus tugtar faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go díograiseach. Leagtar béim chuí ar fhorbairt scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí i ngach rang agus tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaith díobh abairtí a chumadh agus cumarsáid chruinn a dhéanamh sa teanga. Baintear úsáid inmholta as ról imirt agus obair bheirte. Léann na daltaí le brí agus le cruinneas. Moltar ábhar léitheoireachta sa bhreis a aidhmsiú chun scileanna na ndaltaí a chothú a thuilleadh fós. Múintear scileanna scríbhneoireachta go dícheallach agus tá caighdeán oiriúnach á bhaint amach ag na daltaí.
- *The quality of teaching and learning of Irish is very good and the teaching of Irish is undertaken diligently. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' speaking skills in all classes and many of them are capable of structuring sentences and communicating accurately in the language. Commendable use is made of role play and pair work. The pupils read with meaning and accuracy. A wider range of reading material should be acquired to improve the pupils' reading skills further. Writing skills are well taught and the pupils are reaching an appropriate standard.*
- High quality teaching, learning and pupil achievement are in evidence in English. There is a clear focus in all classrooms on developing the pupils' oral language skills and they express their views confidently and competently. The teachers are successful in cultivating the pupils' interest in reading and they are actively encouraged to read for pleasure as they progress through the school. There is also a very systematic approach to the development of the pupils' comprehension skills. The teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for the pupils to write in a range of genres and commendable emphasis is placed on the development of a process approach to writing. The presentation of written work and penmanship is praiseworthy in all classes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a high standard. Good foundation and development of concepts are ensured with well-structured lessons and the judicious and structured use of concrete materials. There is consistent use and development of mathematical language during classroom activities. Commendable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic, the development of number facts and on problem-solving tasks. Very effective differentiation practices are in place for Mathematics and pupil progress is monitored carefully.
- The standard of teaching and learning in the Visual Arts is very good. A broad and balanced programme is provided, and a range of well-delivered lessons was observed at each class level. Commendable emphasis is placed on developing concepts in art and on the provision of appropriate language to pupils to enable them to discuss their work and the work of others. The pupils' work is valued and displayed very attractively throughout the school. Lessons are judiciously linked with other curriculum areas.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Laudable support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate programmes are carefully planned to take account of pupils' individual learning needs and to ensure that they are participating suitably in their learning. There is close consultation between the support teachers and the class teachers, and the progress of individual pupils is tracked systematically. The withdrawal of pupils from mainstream classes has been the main approach to providing support for pupils. However, this model should be expanded to include further opportunities for structured in-class support.

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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 of Management wish to thank sincerely the inspectors who undertook our Whole School Evaluation. Their courtesy and professionalism ensured that the experience was positive and affirming of the whole school community.

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 and the staff are happy to accept and implement the recommendations of the Inspectorate.