

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Castleblaney Infant National School,
Castleblaney, County Monaghan.**

Uimhir rolla: 16319W

Date of inspection: 17 October 2013



1. Introduction

Castleblaney Infant National School is a co-educational school catering for pupils from junior infants to first class. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clogher. Current enrolment is 194 pupils. Overall, attendance levels are very good. The school carefully monitors pupil attendance. The school is included in Band 2 of the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. 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 school is managed by a proactive and strategic board of management.
- The school benefits from the dynamic and dedicated work of the school principal and in-school management team.
- A nurturing and vibrant school climate prevails where pupils are very content and interested in their learning.
- Lessons are well prepared, making very good use of resources and of teaching methodologies which include play-based approaches.
- Pupils apply themselves to tasks with enthusiasm and focus. They are making very good progress in their work
- A very good range of assessment and differentiation practices are in operation in the school.
- Support for pupils is provided in a strategic and stimulating manner

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school, in consultation with other relevant professionals, should further explore possibilities for pupils in the senior special class to avail of education in an age-appropriate school environment.
- A school policy on digital learning should be developed to enhance the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching and learning.
- School surroundings should be further developed as a mathematics rich environment and greater reference made to mathematics trails in the school plan.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Meetings are held regularly and minutes are noted. There is some scope for the more specific delineation of minute items and decisions. The board approaches its work in a strategic and proactive manner, promoting an inclusive and nurturing school culture.
- The school is very ably led by an instructional leader who sets about her work in a very focused, dynamic and collaborative manner. She actively promotes high standards among staff and pupils alike, and is keenly interested in the progress of all pupils. The principal is capably supported by a dedicated in-school management team whose members work collaboratively to promote initiatives and to assist in the day-to-day management of the school.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school has a broad selection of stimulating and interactive resources. School staff has engaged in a wide range of professional development courses which serve to inform good practice. Ancillary staff makes a valuable contribution to the functioning of the school.
- The school uses a wide variety of approaches to communicate with parents. The responses to the parent questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate very high levels of parental satisfaction with teaching in the school. The school benefits from the valuable support of the parents' association.
- The quality of management of pupils is very high. Pupils are very content and cooperative. Teachers interact with pupils in a very respectful and affirming manner. Their behaviour during the evaluation was excellent.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation processes is very good. A wide range of detailed and practical organisational policies are in place. Curricular policies are very well designed and are comprehensive in scope. The school engages in a variety of self-evaluation practices. A number of strategic targets and initiatives have been established as part of the school improvement plan. It is recommended that greater parental involvement be elicited in the review of school policies. A school policy on digital learning should now be developed.
- All teachers write long and short term plans which are of a high quality. They are specific in their focus and give due cognisance to progressional learning. In some cases, objectives could be more specific, with broader reference to differentiation and assessment.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith ar an iomlán. Sa phlean scoile, forbraítear scileanna éisteachta agus labhartha na ndaltaí go céimniúil. Moltar freisin an bhéim a chuirtear ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil sa scoil. Baintear úsáid éifeachtach as modhanna múinte eagsúla, go háirithe as drámaíocht agus as cluichí teanga. Cuirtear béim chuí agus chruthaitheach ar amhráin agus ar rainn. Baintear úsáid an-mhaith as fearas éagsúil chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Baineann saibhreas le foclóir na ndaltaí agus iad ag cumarsáid go muiníneach. Cuirtear timpeallacht phrionta shaibhir ar fáil chun scileanna réamhléitheoireachta a fhorbairt go torthúil.
- *Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. In the school plan, listening and speaking skills are developed incrementally. The emphasis which this school places on informal Irish is also commended. Various teaching methods are used effectively, especially drama and language games. Creative and appropriate emphasis is placed on songs and rhymes. Very good use is made of various resources to stimulate pupil interest. There is a richness to pupils' vocabulary as they speak confidently. A print rich environment is provided to fruitfully develop pre-reading skills.*
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. A whole school focus on the incremental development of pupils' speaking and listening skills is impacting positively on pupils' oral language development. Story is used in a highly commendable manner to facilitate the development of pupils' language, reading and writing skills. Emergent literacy skills are developed carefully with due regard for pupils' varying needs. The school is encouraged to sustain the very good practices which have been established to ensure all pupils are provided with an appropriate range of reading materials and experiences. The staff has appropriately identified the need to monitor the development of pre-writing skills and letter formation for some pupils. Pupils are provided with enriching and praiseworthy opportunities to write for a wide range of purposes using suitable genres. Very good emphasis is placed on rhymes and poetry.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Mathematical language is developed consistently throughout the school. While all classrooms are presented as suitably mathematics-rich environments, there is scope for the further development of the overall school environment in this manner. It is recommended that an inventory of maths trails be added to the school plan. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to actively engage in their learning through well structured play and activity-based lessons. Concrete resources and cooperative learning are used very effectively. Content is appropriately connected to the pupils' life experience and environment. Suitable emphasis is placed on problem solving.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is very good. A wide range of strategies is used to create authentic learning experiences for the pupils in discrete drama lessons. Purposeful integration with other curricular areas facilitates pupil immersion in contexts which allow them to explore emotions and to respond with conviction. Pupils display the ability to co-operate with their peers in the creation of dramatic scenes. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on what they have created. Annual school drama productions enrich the pupils' experiences of a broad range of drama elements.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons have a very good structure with commendable emphasis on play and activity-based learning. A wide range of resources is used effectively. Very good integration practices underpin curriculum delivery which focuses on the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions in accordance with pupils' needs. Teachers make effective use of a variety of methodologies. In some instances, there is potential for the further use of pair work.

Pupils are very interested in their learning and apply themselves to tasks with enthusiasm and pride. Suitable differentiation practices are in use. Pupils' progress, lesson involvement and written work is carefully monitored.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Special education teachers work collaboratively with colleagues to address the specific needs of pupils. Strong emphasis is placed on the early identification of pupils in need of support. Interventions are carefully planned with very good in-class and withdrawal approaches in place. Support is provided in both literacy and numeracy with very good emphasis placed on the use of concrete resources and active learning experiences. Lessons and interventions are delivered in a very engaging and nurturing manner. Pupils benefit significantly from this support and are making appropriate progress.
- Support for pupils in special classes is provided in both a stimulating and purposeful manner. Pupils clearly enjoy lessons and very good provision is made for the development of life skills. Lesson content and methodologies are appropriate and very effectively connected to the pupils' life experience and environment. Individual education plans are in place for each pupil. Overall, planning is of a high quality. In some cases, targets should be more specific with due regard for the priority needs of the pupils and for continuity and progression in their learning. A number of pupils in the junior special class are integrated in mainstream settings within this infant school. It is recommended that these pupils be provided with greater opportunities for integration with their peers. Pupils in the senior special class are provided with opportunities to integrate with peers in neighbouring primary schools. It is recommended that the school, in consultation with other relevant professionals, explore further possibilities for these pupils to avail of education in an age-appropriate school environment.
- The school benefits from the support of a home-school community liaison teacher who is shared with two neighbouring schools. A variety of strategies is adopted to promote parental involvement in school activities and to help parents support children in their learning.
- The school completion programme augments the resources which the school uses to support the implementation of its DEIS action plan.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board wishes to note the in-depth knowledge of the school gained by the inspectorate during the inspection, as was evident in the report. The board welcomes the acknowledgment of the nurturing vibrant school climate, the proactive work of the board of management, the in-school management team and the parents' association. The board also welcomes the affirmation of the very good planning and work of the teachers and staff, resulting in a high quality of teaching and learning outcomes for the children. The board is happy that the inspection confirms that children with special educational needs are very well supported, both in mainstream classes and in the two special classes in the school, with positive outcomes for the children.

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 accepts the recommendations by the inspectorate and the following actions are taking place:

1. A meeting with the patron in relation to future special class placement. A team is being set up to evaluate this.
2. School self-evaluation is focusing on Mathematics in the environment with an emphasis on Mathematics trails.
3. A digital policy plan has commenced.