

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

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Patrick's National School
Boneyarrow, Clogh
Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 16445E**

Date of inspection: 18 September 2013



1. Introduction

St. Patrick's National School is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. There are eighty-three pupils enrolled and the attendance of most pupils is 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 school is managed effectively by a dedicated board of management.
- The principal capably manages the day-to-day running of the school and provides praiseworthy curriculum leadership.
- The staff team is strongly committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils.
- The pupils are well behaved and engage with high levels of interest and enthusiasm in their learning.
- There is consistent improvement in overall attainment in English reading and Mathematics in recent years.
- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is of a high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the duties assigned to members of the in-school management team be reviewed in order to utilise fully the potential of the team to lead improvement and innovation in teaching and learning.
- The school should seek the views of parents on relevant school matters in a systematic manner.
- In English, greater attention should be given the development of emergent writing in infant and junior classes.
- In structuring provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the school should ensure sustained and structured in-class support for infant pupils in both literacy and numeracy.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed effectively by a dedicated board of management. The board's priorities include the provision of support for the teachers and the promotion of a happy learning environment for the pupils. Resources are managed successfully and the board engages in frequent review of school policy. It is advised that the school's financial accounts be certified annually.
- The principal capably manages the day-to-day running of the school and provides praiseworthy curriculum leadership. The members of the in-school management team share in the decision-making process in a spirit of teamwork and collegiality and undertake their allocated responsibilities with commitment. In order to utilise the team's full potential, it is recommended that assigned duties are reviewed and that the team's role in leading improvement and innovation in teaching and learning is strengthened further.
- The management of physical resources is very good. The efforts of the board in ensuring that the school facility, both inside and out, is well maintained and appropriately resourced are commendable. Where finances permit, it is advised that class libraries be extended, with priority being given to the increased provision of reading material in the infant classroom.
- The school climate is warm and friendly. In the questionnaires, almost all parents reported that the school is welcoming of them. However, their responses also highlighted the potential to increase the level of consultation with parents regarding pertinent school matters. Opportunities to facilitate the more active involvement of parents in in-school activities should also be considered. The recent establishment of a parents' association and its plans to affiliate to the National Parents' Council (Primary) is welcomed.
- The management of pupils is very good. The staff team is strongly committed to the care, welfare and learning of pupils. The pupils are well behaved and engage with high levels of interest and enthusiasm in their learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school curricular planning is good. For the most part, curriculum plans provide useful guidance to teachers and impact positively on classroom practice and learning outcomes for pupils. The quality of organisational planning is variable. When reviewing organisational policies, it is advised that attention be directed towards the code of behaviour, the anti-bullying policy and the health and safety statement in order to ensure that they comply with relevant national guidelines and legislation.
- All teachers provide good quality long-term and short-term planning. In some instances, greater use should be made of objective-based planning, most notably in English. As the school engages further with the school self-evaluation process, whole-school curriculum plans and individual teachers' classroom planning

should reflect the targets and approaches identified in school improvement plans so as to inform classroom practice at all levels.

- 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 and learning is good. The teachers work diligently and provide valuable learning experiences for pupils. Very good practice in teaching was observed in some contexts. In these settings, the teachers skilfully integrate subject content and ensure that new learning builds upon the pupils' previous learning. Subject-specific skills are taught consistently and the pupils are encouraged and enabled to use their developing skills in cross-curricular learning. Most lessons are delivered in a structured manner making good provision for the active involvement of pupils. A wide variety of teaching methodologies and resources, including ICT, is employed successfully. The pupils are active and for the most part, motivated in their learning and successfully apply themselves to learning tasks. In the questionnaires, most pupils confirmed that they enjoy their lessons and learning. There is consistent improvement in overall attainment in English reading and Mathematics in recent years.
- The teachers draw on a useful range of assessment tools to monitor individual pupil progress. Results of standardised testing are recorded carefully and pupil attainment is tracked and monitored. A greater emphasis on assessment-for-learning and on pupil self-assessment is now advised.
- Tá rath ar theagasc na Gaeilge agus tá an caighdeán atá sroichte ag formhór na ndaltaí go maith sna ceithre scil teanga. Múintear agus úsáidtear réimse maith foclóra agus nathanna cainte sa chumarsáid neamhfhoirmiúil agus sa chumarsáid fhoirmiúil. Tá a dtuscint teanga agus a rannpháirtíocht go han-mhaith agus tá féinmhuinín acu ag cur iad féin in iúl trí Ghaeilge. Labhraíonn cuid de na daltaí sna h-aranganna go muiníneach leanúnach mar gheall ar dhaoine cáiliúla agus tá a gcumas ceistiúcháin go maith. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí á saothrú go céimniúil ach d'fhéadfaí béim sa bhreis a chur ar scileanna scríbhneoireachta neamhspleácha. Déantar soláthar maith de rannta, d'fhillíocht agus d'amhránaíocht trasna na scoile.

Irish is taught successfully and the standard achieved by most pupils in the four language skills is good. A good range of vocabulary and phrases are taught and used in informal and formal conversations. Their understanding of language and their participation is very good and they are confident expressing themselves through Irish. Some pupils in the senior classes speak confidently and with continuity about famous people and their ability to question is good. The pupils' reading and writing skills are developed systematically but more emphasis could

be placed on developing independent writing skills. Good provision is made for rhymes, poetry and singing throughout the school.

- In English, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Due attention is directed to the progression of the pupils' oral language capacity. The school has successfully implemented a range of literacy initiatives including the Accelerated Reader Programme with senior pupils. The current focus on comprehension strategies is commended. In order to support continued development in reading skills, it is advised that renewed and increased attention be directed towards the use of class novels from second to sixth class. In the questionnaires, most pupils reported that they think they are doing well at reading. Effective provision is made for the development of spelling skills. While writing genres are addressed systematically, it is recommended that increased emphasis be placed on the development of emergent writing in infant and junior classes. The school places good emphasis on poetry composition and appreciation and the recent introduction of an annual literary award for poetry is commended.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Praiseworthy features of current practice include the emphasis on oral/mental mathematics and mathematical language. New concepts are introduced skilfully through well-designed talk and discussion. In the main, the pupils display competent understanding of concepts previously addressed, most notably in senior classes. In order to build their mathematical confidence further and to ensure ongoing improvements in achievement, the school is advised to investigate and consider the range of numeracy-specific initiatives being implemented in schools nationally.
- In Geography, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. A balanced and structured curriculum is provided and many pupils demonstrate a good depth of knowledge in relation to their local environment. In the lessons observed, pupil interest was generated successfully and the pupils' capacity to discuss their learning using appropriate language and terminology is being developed consistently. Horticultural work undertaken by the pupils involving preparation, planting and harvesting of flowers and vegetables in the school garden is commended. Successful and continued participation in the *Green Schools* programme supports the good quality of pupil achievement in Geography.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is of a high quality. Programmes of learning are devised collaboratively and implemented skilfully. The pupils experience effective teaching in supportive in-class and withdrawal settings. They are progressing well in relation to the achievement of their individualised learning targets. In reviewing the school's policy for pupils with additional learning needs, it is recommended that a greater emphasis is placed on prevention and early-intervention strategies for infants. This should take the form of sustained and structured in-class support for infant pupils in both literacy and numeracy. *Published April 2014*

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 St. Patrick's N.S. welcomes the positive findings in the Whole School Evaluation report which, it believes acknowledges and affirms the work being carried out 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 and accepts the recommendations made in the report which will be implemented as part of a continuous process to further enhance reading and learning in our school.