

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Ovens National School,
Ovens, Co Cork
Uimhir rolla: 17251T**

Date of inspection: 03 May 2013



1. Introduction

Ovens National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school located in the parish of Ovens which is 16 kilometres west of Cork City. Enrolment has grown to 337 pupils and attendance is very good. The school staff comprises of a recently-appointed administrative principal, twelve mainstream class teachers, two learning-support teachers and two resource teachers. A further two teachers work part-time hours providing support to pupils in special-education settings. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school is characterised by a very positive climate where the board of management, staff and parents work collaboratively to ensure high-quality educational provision.
- The board of management is highly effective and demonstrates a clear commitment to the emerging needs of the school.
- The principal has very effective leadership and management skills and is supported by a dedicated staff.
- The parents' association and the general parent body are very supportive of the work of the school and contribute to enriching the educational experience of pupils.
- Pupil learning outcomes in English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and Drama are of a very high standard.
- High-quality provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management reviews some procedures within the existing enrolment policy.
- Greater linkage between the whole-school plan and individual teacher planning is recommended.
- The current very good practice relating to Individual Educational Plan (IEP) formulation, observed amongst the majority of support teachers, should be extended to all special educational needs (SEN) settings.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and is highly effective in providing direction to the school. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and minutes of meetings indicate that the board operates in a diligent, committed and supportive manner. The broad range of skills amongst board members has resulted in the board successfully managing staffing, accommodation and financial matters. The procurement of additional accommodation illustrates the board's ability to plan strategically for the developing needs of the school. The board has recently reviewed and ratified a wide range of policies and it is advised that the board now reviews some procedures within the existing enrolment policy.
- The principal articulates a clear vision for the school. His very effective leadership is characterised by high professional standards and expectations. His collaborative working style empowers colleagues and ensures good communication between all stakeholders. The principal displays very effective curriculum leadership resulting in a well-managed school with a focus on teaching and learning. He is ably supported by the in-school management (ISM) team, whose members display a strong commitment to their posts. Their duties include curricular and extracurricular roles which add considerably to school life. Of particular note is the school's innovative practice in information communication technology (ICT) and its long-term involvement in Comenius projects.
- The management of resources is to be commended. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard and will be further enhanced by the current building project. A good range of teaching and learning resources is used effectively and classrooms are well resourced with libraries, ICT and SEN materials. The secretarial support greatly assists in the day-to-day administration of the school. The school's special-needs assistants provide high levels of support to individual pupils and make a valuable contribution to implementing the school's inclusion policy.
- Relationships are very positive and communication amongst the school community is of a very high standard. The parents' association contributes to many aspects of school life. A meeting with the parents' association, combined with information received from parental questionnaires, reveal very positive attitudes to the school. Almost all parents believe that the school is well-managed, is welcoming of parents and is supportive of their active involvement in the school.
- During the evaluation period the pupils were mannerly and courteous. They were managed effectively in a caring and empathic manner and the prevailing atmosphere in classrooms was positive. Responses to the pupil questionnaires indicate that they view their teachers very positively.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- An extensive range of administrative and curricular plans provide good guidance in the daily organisation of the school. Curricular plans are generally of a high quality. However the plan for English would be further enhanced if explicit content for each class setting was more clearly defined.
- All teachers prepare long-term and short-term planning and complete monthly progress records. The relationship between school planning and teachers' individual planning is not always clear and this is a matter which merits review by the staff.

- The school has made a very commendable start on the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. A significant amount of work has been undertaken and ongoing review will further define the SSE targets that have already been identified.
- 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 in lessons observed was of a very high standard. Teachers presented well-structured lessons and prepared attractive and stimulating learning environments. Pupils were actively engaged in the learning process through the provision of opportunities to engage in collaborative and cooperative activities. Pupil learning outcomes in the areas observed were very positive.
- In English, there was evidence of high-quality teaching and learning throughout the school. Pupils' oral language is systematically developed in the junior classes and this provides a good foundation for literacy in later classes. Language skills are further enhanced through poetry and rhyme and the provision of discrete language lessons. Pupils' reading skills are carefully developed and there is evidence that they are making very good progress in acquiring reading and comprehension skills. Pupils read with a high level of confidence and effective use is made of the novel in senior classes. Given the high standard of reading in these classes, it is recommended that consideration be given to further extending the range of novels explored to broaden pupils' reading experience. The approach adopted to writing skills is proving successful and the presentation and standard of pupils' written work is of a very high quality.
- Gabhann caighdeán ard le teagasc agus le foghlaim na Gaeilge. Múintear raon leathan d'amhráin agus de rainn sna ranganna go léir. Múintear ceachtanna dea-chéimnithe, ag baint úsáide as cluichí teanga, dramaíocht agus as ról-imirt. Tá réimse maith d'ábhair léitheoireachta ar fáil sa scoil agus múintear an léitheoireacht go rianúil. Léann na daltaí go muiníneach. Tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta go maith sa scoil.
- *There are high standards in the teaching and learning of Irish. A wide range of songs and poems are taught in all classrooms. Well-structured lessons using language games, drama and role-play are presented. There is a good variety of reading materials available in the school and reading is taught in a systematic manner. Pupils read with confidence. The standard of writing is good throughout the school..*
- The quality of the teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Very effective use is made of a wide range of activity-based approaches. A combination of whole class, group and pair work was evident in all classrooms. Concepts are explored using a range concrete manipulatives. A review of the assessment data and interaction with the pupils indicate that pupils are making good progress in all strands of the mathematics curriculum. The development of mathematical language in all classrooms is noteworthy. Commendable emphasis has been placed on problem-solving activities.
- Very good quality drama lessons were observed during the evaluation period. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to develop pupils' understanding of the key elements of drama. Previous learning in other curricular areas is used effectively to provide a context for lessons. Pupils engaged enthusiastically in all lessons observed and assumed character roles with confidence. They are facilitated to develop their recitation skills and

pupils observed displayed a capacity to communicate thoughts, feelings and attitudes in both verbal and non-verbal formats. The services of an external facilitator in drama are used to assist in the implementation of the drama curriculum. Pupils avail of opportunities to partake in external competitions such as Feis Maitiú.

- Good practice in assessment of learning was observed in the school during the evaluation period. A suitable range of assessment instruments are used regularly to good effect. Teacher-designed tasks and checklists are used in classrooms to monitor and track pupils' progress across the curriculum. Standardised screening tests are administered annually in first to sixth classes and results are effectively used to identify pupils in need of additional support. Diagnostic testing is utilised appropriately in SEN settings. Pupils' written work is regularly monitored and positive evaluative comments are provided by the teachers.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- High quality provision is made for pupils with special educational needs in a positive and supportive learning environment. There is a good balance between in-class, withdrawal and station-teaching approaches. A wide range of learning resources, including ICT, is available and used appropriately. The lessons observed were clearly focused on addressing the learning needs of the pupils. Pupils' progress is closely monitored, recorded and communicated effectively to parents. Teachers plan comprehensively and IEPs are formulated for each pupil, although a number of different formats are in use. It is recommended that a common approach to IEP formulation be adopted in all SEN settings.
- The arrangement whereby SEN teachers take responsibility for implementing curricular areas with mainstream classes should be subject to ongoing review to ensure all pupils with additional needs continue to receive appropriate provision.
- The school's innovative plan for data management and maintenance of records for SEN pupils is highly commended.