

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Patrick's National School
Glencullen
Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 17507F**

Date of inspection: 14 June 2012



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

1. Introduction

St. Patrick's National School is a co-educational school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance of the 157 pupils is very good. Strategies are in place to promote regular attendance. 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, principal, staff and parents are praised for their commitment to the ongoing development of the school and for the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.
- The school succeeds in promoting the holistic development of all pupils through the provision of a wide range of effective curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- The principal is a dynamic and effective leader and is ably supported by a team of highly skilled and dedicated teachers.
- Pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate high levels of courteousness and pride in their school and learning. The standard of their achievement is high.
- The school has an impressive range of resources which is used purposefully to support teaching and learning.
- There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- The board of management and parents' association give commendable support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A whole-school approach to assessment is recommended. The outcomes of formal and informal assessments should be utilised to meet the learning needs of pupils of varying abilities.
- An increased focus in individual planning on the specific learning outcomes for pupils and the methodologies to be used is recommended.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and functions in an effective manner. The board is commended for upgrading and maintaining the school building to a very high standard. It oversees the management of the school's finances effectively and has placed significant emphasis on the acquisition of resources particularly in the area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The board takes an active role in the devising and ratification of school organisational and curriculum policies. Almost all parents surveyed responded that the board keeps them informed of school matters.

- The principal is a dynamic leader, who in addition to carrying out her teaching duties leads the school in an effective and democratic manner. She displays a strong sense of pride in the pupils' and teachers' achievements and she supports the staff in leading the development of curricular, extracurricular, organisational and pastoral dimensions of school-life. She is ably supported by a team of highly skilled and dedicated teachers.
- The school has an impressive range of resources which is used effectively to support teaching and learning. Learning environments are of high quality with attractive displays of pupils' work in a number of curriculum areas in classrooms and around the school.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very good. The school has in place a range of effective procedures to facilitate communication with parents. A comprehensive school website is successfully used to share information with parents and to display the pupils' work and achievements across a variety of curriculum areas. The school has an active parents' association which supports the school in a significant way through fundraising and its involvement in a wide range of school events and initiatives.
- The management of pupils is very good. Relationships are based on mutual respect. The principal and staff display commendable levels of commitment to the holistic development and welfare of all pupils and this is successfully fostered through the school's wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate high levels of courteousness and pride in their school and learning. In the pupil questionnaires all pupils responded that they know the school rules.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Effective approaches and systems for the development of whole-school and classroom planning are in place. A wide range of organisational policies has been developed. These give good guidance on the operation of the school. Curriculum plans state the objectives from the curriculum and suggest learning activities to support the achievement of these objectives. Approaches to individual classroom planning vary with some teachers preparing high quality objectives-based planning. An increased focus by all teachers in individual planning on the specific learning outcomes for pupils and the methodologies to be used is advised.
- Self-evaluation is a commendable feature of practice at the school. Individual teachers regularly review and reflect on their practice. A number of programmes of learning have been agreed, analysis of standardised test results carried out and priority areas for review and future development have 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

- Ar an iomlán tá múineadh agus foghlaim sa Ghaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Cuireann na hoidí ceachtanna i láthair atá bunaithe ar théamaí an churaclaim Gaeilge. Go ginearálta, baineann na hoidí feidhm chuí as réimse achmhainní agus modhanna múinte le haghaidh múineadh na Gaeilge. Chonacthas roinnt ceachtanna ar ard-chaighdeán. Bhí múineadh

foclóra agus frasaí mar chuid dilís de na ceachtanna seo. Cuireadh ar chumas na ndaltaí sna seomraí ranga sin teanga nua a chleachtadh i mbeirteanna nó i ngrupaí agus bhí siad in ann ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt go stuama i nGaeilge. Bhí múineadh scileanna léitheoireachta san áireamh sa deachleachtas seo, trí úsáid a bhaint as réimse leathan léitheoireachta agus modhanna múinte éifeachtacha. I roinnt seomraí ranga, léiríodh samplaí maithe de scríobhneoireacht na ndaltaí. Ba chóir an dea-chleachtas a léiríodh sa scoil a leathnú agus a fhorbairt chun chumas labhartha gach dalta a neartú agus liofacht níos mó a chothú.

- *The overall standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Teachers present lessons that are based on the themes of the Irish curriculum. Overall, they make appropriate use of a range of resources and methodologies to support the teaching of Irish. Some exemplary lessons were observed. These lessons incorporated the explicit teaching of vocabulary and phrases. The pupils in these classrooms were enabled to practice new language in pairs or groups and could confidently ask as well as answer questions in Irish. This best practice also included the specific teaching of reading skills through the use of a variety of reading materials and effective methodologies. In a number of classrooms some good quality samples of pupils' writing were evident. The exemplary practice evident in the school should be shared and developed in order to strengthen all pupils' ability to speak Irish and to promote greater fluency.*
- The standard of teaching and learning in English is high. Pupils demonstrate competent oral language skills and can discuss a range of topics with confidence. Their achievement in reading is very good. All classrooms provide print-rich environments in which language and reading are promoted. Libraries are well stocked and the pupils are exposed to a variety of reading material. A range of strategies is employed purposefully to develop pupils' reading skills. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and pupils' independent reading skills are developed through the use of supplementary readers and novels. Ability-grouping for reading occurs in some classes. This practice should be extended to accommodate fully the breadth of ability levels at all class levels. Pupils experience writing in a wide range of genres and have produced some fine booklets of their own stories. The quality of pupils' penmanship is high. Practice in relation to the teaching of poetry varies from class to class. The consistent implementation of the whole-school approach to the teaching of poetry as outlined in the school plan is advised.
- The overall standard of teaching in Mathematics is very good. Specific elements of effective practice include appropriate use of concrete materials, station teaching and well-structured lessons. Differentiation in Mathematics is provided primarily through learning-support teaching for the less-able pupils and individual pupil support while the whole class are on task. For the most part, pupil attainment in Mathematics is high with a number of pupils demonstrating excellent ability in the subject. In order to cater for pupils at different levels of ability in Mathematics, it is recommended that the grouping of pupils for lessons be considered with the use of in-class support where possible.
- Music is taught to a high standard. Pupils perform excellently in song singing. Pupils can confidently sing a wide repertoire of songs including rounds, partner songs and part songs. In addition to in-class song singing pupils from third class upwards are encouraged to take part in the school choir hosted by a parent volunteer. The pupils' sense of pitch and rhythm is successfully developed through the consistent implementation of a whole-school music literacy programme, supportive music environments and skilfully delivered music lessons. Pupils from second class upwards learn to play the tin whistle and the quality of their tin whistle playing is high. There is very good practice in the area of exploring sounds and composing. The pupils are enabled to explore sounds and compose simple rhythmic patterns using instruments, body percussion and vocal sounds.

- There is commendable teaching of Science. Features of effective practice include, well-structured lessons, clear explanation and careful questioning by teachers. Pupils are afforded ample opportunities to work as scientists and to develop independent thinking skills. Environmental awareness and care is well catered for through the school's participation in the *Green School's Initiative* and the school gardening programme. The school successfully participates in a wide range of national science initiatives. Pupils demonstrate very good awareness of the importance of environmental care. They display high levels of knowledge of the various topics taught.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high. Lessons are characterised by, clear explanation of concepts, purposeful use of resources and pupils' interest in learning is consistently promoted. Many productive opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively and to develop independent thinking skills. There is variation in the quality of assessment practices and in the use of assessment data to inform programmes of work in mainstream classes. In some classes there is very good assessment practice where teachers use a range of assessment modes including pupils' own self-assessment, checklists, teacher tests, samples of work and standardised test results. This very good practice should be extended to all teachers, using the data to inform specific programmes of teaching and learning for the varying ability levels of pupils. The presentation of pupils' work is of a high standard.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school has a positive, welcoming and supportive atmosphere. The quality of support for pupils with SEN is very good. Support settings are comfortable, print-rich and aesthetically pleasing. The school's policy on special educational needs has recently been reviewed and incorporates the staged approach. Support for pupils in literacy and numeracy is provided primarily through withdrawal in groups and /or individually. Consideration should be given to examining other models of support. Support teachers carefully prepare individual plans and use these to inform their programmes of learning. Clear and specific targets based on pupils' identified learning needs are set and regularly reviewed. Teaching observed in support settings is of very good quality. Pupils participate well in sessions and are achieving positive learning outcomes. There is very good communication and consultation with parents of pupils with SEN.

Published November 2012.

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. wishes to acknowledge the courteous, professional and positive approach of the Department Inspectors in conducting our Whole School Evaluation in June 2012. The Board is happy with the constructive nature of the report and the quality of the dialogue with the Board, the teaching and support staff and parents.

The Board of Management are particularly pleased that the report refers to an overall high quality of teaching and learning within the school with further reference being made to some examples of very effective teaching.

The report acknowledges the conscientious and dedicated nature of the teachers of St. Patrick's NS, the supportive role of the Parents' Association and the effectiveness of the Board in managing the school. The Board of Management and the teachers also welcome the observations of enthusiasm, courtesy and pride amongst the pupils of St. Patrick's NS in their school and their learning.

The Board of Management and staff are encouraged by the positive affirmation contained in the Report.

We welcome the recommendations and advice and will work collectively to ensure their implementation.

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 of Management, in consultation with the school community, is committed to implementing the recommendations outlined in this report.

The Board of Management welcomes the statement that there is very good assessment practice within the school and will engage with the staff to work towards and ensure consistency in the execution of assessment practices across the whole school.

As self evaluation is recognised as a commendable feature of practice in our school, we are already reviewing methodologies appropriate for ensuring specific learning outcomes for all pupils.

