

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Saint Oliver Plunkett National School
Balrothery, Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 17569E

Date of inspection: 19 November 2014



A N R O I N N | **D E P A R T M E N T O F**
O I D E A C H A I S | **E D U C A T I O N**
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | **A N D S K I L L S**

1. Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation was undertaken in Saint Oliver Plunkett National School in November 2014. Saint Oliver Plunkett National School is a co-educational, vertical primary school with an enrolment of 341 pupils. Attendance levels are good and represent an improvement in recent years. During this whole-school evaluation provision for Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and History was evaluated. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and four support teaching 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 work of the board of management is very effective in terms of its scope and impact.
- The principal demonstrates a clear sense of purpose with regard to developing teaching and learning within the school.
- The behaviour of the pupils during the evaluation was exemplary.
- The school has developed a very effective approach to engaging in school self-evaluation and this is impacting positively on pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching skills in all observed settings is very high.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good.
- An extensive range of assessment data is used effectively to inform the planning and review processes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- There is scope to re-configure the co-ordination of support provision for pupils with SEN. It is recommended that this would become the responsibility of a member of the in-school management team.
- Differentiation activities for less-able or more-able pupils should be outlined in teachers' planning as clearly identified learning objectives and outcomes.
- There is a need to improve penmanship and the standard of presentation of pupils' written work.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is of a very high quality with board members demonstrating a strong and collective commitment to the effective functioning of the school.

Board members demonstrate a commendable awareness of current priorities for the development of learning within the school.

- The quality of in-school management is very good. The principal demonstrates a calm and measured approach to school leadership. She has a clear vision for the on-going development of the school and for teaching and learning within the school. She has successfully established a range of purposeful improvement initiatives that are making this vision a reality. The work of the in-school management team has resulted in developments in curriculum provision that are impacting positively on pupils' learning.
- There is a very good range of teaching resources within the school which is used successfully to create interesting learning experiences for pupils. Information and communication technology is being used effectively as a medium of learning. The school presents as a clean and safe learning environment for pupils. Plans are advanced for the building of a school extension which will further enhance the learning environment for pupils.
- In a meeting with the two parents' representatives on the board, it was evident that parents are very satisfied with the quality of education being provided for their children. A questionnaire completed by parents as part of the evaluation process also confirms high levels of satisfaction with the standard of education particularly in terms of the teaching skills of teachers and the learning achievements of pupils. There are also high levels of satisfaction with how well the pupils are treated. The parents' association should consider affiliating with the National Parents Council Primary.
- The behaviour of pupils during the evaluation was exemplary. Teachers are very successful in creating a positive and ordered learning environment and pupils engage very well in their learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. Organisational policies are very effective in contributing to the creation of an ordered school environment. Curriculum planning is most effective when it focuses on documenting what is specific to the provision of the curriculum within the school's own particular context. This should be borne in mind in future reviews of curriculum planning. Teachers' long-term planning would be enhanced by the delineation of content into specified time-frames. Teachers' short term planning is effective in identifying learning outcomes and activities in sufficient detail. Further elaboration on how provision is made to meet varying pupil ability levels will enhance the impact of planning on practice. To this end, teachers should make further use of the worthwhile assessment data that is being maintained. In general, monthly progress records are maintained with a good amount of detail. However, it should be noted that in a few instances textbook page numbers comprise the main detail in monthly progress records and this is not satisfactory practice. Monthly progress records could also usefully include a reflection by teachers on pupils' learning within the areas prioritised as a result of the school self-evaluation process.
- A very effective school self-evaluation process has been implemented within the school. It is very commendable that the agreed actions have been implemented by teachers within classrooms and that these have impacted positively on pupils' learning.
- 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 cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá scileanna éisteachta agus tuisciana na ndaltaí forbartha go breá. Tá raon leathan foclóra agus abairtí ar eolas ag na daltaí agus is dea-chleachtas é go bhfuil na daltaí in ann a n-abairtí féin a chruthú. Is breá iad na deiseanna atá tugtha dóibh chun cumarsáid a dhéanamh leis na habairtí seo agus is léir go mbaineann na daltaí a lán taitneamh as seo toisc go bhfuil siad in ann é seo a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán maith. Chun tógáil ar an gcleachtas seo, b'fhiú measúnú níos rialta a dhéanamh ar bhonn scoile uile. Léann na daltaí le tuiscint agus líofacht. Déantar cúram maith den scríbhneoireacht. Cé go n-eagraítear gníomhaíochtaí scríbhneoireachta go rialta, moltar go gcuirfí béim bhreise ar scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Chun tógáil ar seo, agus le leanúnachas ó rang go rang a chothú, moltar torthaí foghlama níos soiléire a rianú do gach rang. *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Listening and understanding skills are developed well. Pupils have a wide range of vocabulary and phrases and it is good practice that the pupils are able to construct their own sentences. Worthwhile opportunities are given to pupils to engage in communication and it is clear that pupils enjoy this because they are able to engage to a good standard. To extend this practice, it would be worthwhile engaging in more systematic assessment on a whole-school basis. Pupils read with understanding and fluency. Good attention is paid to writing. Even though writing activities are organised regularly, it is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on the development of pupils' independent writing skills. To add to this, and to encourage continuity from class to class, it is recommended that clearer learning outcomes be identified for each class.*
- The quality of teaching, learning, and pupil achievement in English is good. A very effective approach to oral language development has been implemented within the school and this results in focused oral language lessons that facilitate progression within the school and the monitoring of pupils' progress. A coherent approach to the development of reading skills is evident in the school and pupils are enthusiastic and confident in their reading. There is scope, however, to develop pupils' fluency in reading and to extend the range of books available for reading. In some instances, specific comment needs to be made in the written reports sent home to parents when there is a discrepancy between the result obtained in a standardised test and the teacher's assessment. A systematic approach is taken to the teaching of writing and there is evidence that pupils can write successfully according to the conventions of a number of genres. Penmanship and presentation of pupils' written work could be improved in a number of classrooms throughout the school. While teachers are aware of this and some whole-school and individual teacher initiatives are in place, it is clear that the most successful improvements are happening when teachers provide pupils with written feedback on their work on a systematic basis that is specific to the individual pupil. There is further scope for the school to review the teaching of spelling. A particular programme for the teaching of grammar should be reviewed with a view to adopting a more judicious approach to its teaching.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are clearly structured and are taught with a careful attention to developing conceptual understanding and the correct use of mathematical language. Particular attention has been paid to the development of pupils' problem-solving skills in recent times and this is resulting in pupils having a confidence and enthusiasm for engaging in problem solving. A further emphasis has been placed successfully on developing pupils' awareness

of mathematics in the environment. There is scope for the school to further its efforts to provide pupils and parents with feedback on progress in Mathematics. In reviewing the organisation and structure of team-teaching, further opportunities should be provided to pupils to consolidate their learning.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is good. A wide range of resources is used effectively to enable pupils to develop a suitable range of concepts and skills. Pupils demonstrate a good sense of chronology and have engaged in the analysis of evidence for a range of topics and themes. Greater emphasis should be placed on local history to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of how History has impacted on their local area. The quality of project work observed throughout the school during the evaluation was very high. Effective integration with other curricular areas has enriched pupils' interest and learning. Further consideration should be given to enhancing the recording and assessment aspects of pupils' learning in History.
- The quality of teaching in all lessons observed was very high. Lessons are well structured and taught with due regard to pace, active participation and pupils' interest levels. The questioning skills of teachers are very good which, combined with very effective classroom management skills, results in engaging lessons for pupils. It is commendable that teachers in the infant classrooms have embraced the principles of *Aistear-The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and are successfully promoting play-based learning. In a questionnaire completed as part of the evaluation process, pupils report high levels of satisfaction with how they feel they are treated in school and how they feel they are progressing with their learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school's commitment to the pastoral care of pupils permeates the high quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs. The special-needs assistants work in a caring and competent way to effectively assist pupils to engage with the curriculum. A proactive, collaborative approach promoted by the school ensures the early identification of pupils with special educational needs.
- A comprehensive policy has been devised which clearly delineates the staged approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs. Supplementary support is currently provided using a number of models of in-class support and also by withdrawing some pupils for tuition. The purposeful, evidence-based, in-class interventions should now be extended to support pupils in some middle and senior classes. This extension of support provision would be assisted by reviewing and reconfiguring current practices of co-ordination. Lessons observed in all special education settings were well structured, resourced and suitably paced. High-quality, affirming teacher-pupil interactions were observed. They were informed by appropriate planning documentation and, where required, individual education plans (IEPs). An extensive range of assessment data is used effectively to inform the planning and review processes. In some instances there was scope to enhance the specificity of targets and the clarity of short-term planning. The involvement of parents and pupils in the IEP process is commended. It is evident that pupils in receipt of supplementary support are benefitting significantly from this assistance.
- The support teachers are encouraged to engage in further professional development to sustain good practices and to ensure their on-going development into the future.

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