

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Nicholas of Myra NS
Kinsealy, Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 17785K

Date of inspection: 10 February 2011



1. Introduction

St Nicholas of Myra National School, Kinsealy, Co. Dublin has an enrolment of 137 pupils from junior infants to sixth class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school is effectively managed by the board of management and the in-school management team.
- Good relationships exist between all members of the school community, resulting in the implementation of a variety of additional school activities that add richness to pupils' learning.
- An ordered and safe learning environment has been created in the school with all teachers demonstrating a positive rapport with pupils.
- The teaching of phonological awareness skills in English is effective.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The range of pupil ability levels should be better targeted in order to optimise learning for pupils.
- Níor mhiste don scoil chóras céimnithe a chur ar siúl i labhairt agus scríbhneoireacht sa Ghaeilge chun feabhas a chur ar chumas na ndaltaí sa teanga
(*A systematic programme for both the speaking and writing of Irish should be put in place to improve pupils' competency in the language.*)
- The teaching of English reading in the senior classes should be based on the systematic teaching of reading skills. More rigorous monitoring of the content and presentation of written work by many pupils in the middle and senior classes is required.
- In some learning support provision, the approach to planning, consultation with parents and record-keeping each require development. A greater emphasis on group tuition is advocated. Achieving a closer correlation between learning support and the mainstream classroom is required.
- The school needs to improve the quality of education it is providing. The school should adopt an action-planning approach, including the setting of annual priorities, to achieve this.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good, particularly in terms of developing and maintaining school facilities and resources and providing for a safe and clean learning environment for pupils. Greater prominence could usefully be given to the discussion of educational issues at board meetings. The dates of ratification and review of school policies should be recorded in the minutes of board meetings. Pupil attendance figures indicate that there is a significant number of pupils, particularly boys, who have a high rate of absenteeism. This issue needs to be addressed by the board.
- The work of the in-school management team is good. To enhance the impact of this work, the duties of the in-school management team should be informed by the setting of annual priorities for the development of teaching and learning.
- Resources are very well managed.
- Management of relationships with the parent community is good. In a questionnaire distributed to all parents during the school inspection, all parents report that the school is welcoming of their involvement in school life and express satisfaction with the quality of education being provided by the school for their children. Providing an opportunity for parents to contribute to the setting of annual priorities for the development of educational provision is suggested as a means of enhancing parental involvement in the school.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is good, with effective routines in place to ensure the smooth and safe running of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is satisfactory. Key organisational policies required by legislation such as enrolment and a code of behaviour are in place. Organisational policies are clear and are impacting positively on school life. Curriculum plans, however, are too general to contribute meaningfully to the development of curricular provision within the school. Future reviews of curriculum planning should aim to produce more detailed plans which focus on documenting practice specific to the school.
- A process of self evaluation, including the involvement of teachers, parents and the board, which leads to the setting of annual priorities for the development of educational provision within the school is recommended in order to optimise the impact of planning on teaching and learning.
- The quality of teachers' planning varies from very good to requiring further development. Where teachers' planning requires development, more careful attention needs to be paid to addressing the range of pupil ability levels.
- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the

procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Cé go raibh struchtúr cinnte agus cuspóirí foghlamtha cinnte ag gabháil le fórmhar na gceachtanna feicthe le linn an mheasúnaithe, níl caighdeán sásúil bainte amach ag na daltaí sa Ghaeilge sna meán-ranganna agus sna hardranganna. Tá foclóir cuí leathan ar eolas ag na ranganna sóisearacha ach níl go leor forbartha déanta ar an bhfoclóir seo de réir mar a théann na daltaí tríd an scoil. Moltar don scoil scéim a chur ar siúl dírithe ar an gcaighdeán a bheadh réasúnta i ngach rang a aithint. Ó thaobh na leitheoireachta de, cé go bhfuil daltaí áirithe in ann sliochtanna cuí a léamh, tá roinnt daltaí eile ann agus tá na téacsanna ródheacair dóibh. Mar sin, níor mhiste do na hoidí soláthar a dhéanamh do riachtanais éagsúla na ndaltaí. Moltar córas céimnithe a chur ar siúl freisin maidir le forbairt na scríbeoireachta. Tá sé ar intinn ag an scoil obair a dhéanamh chun éispéireas na ndaltaí a shaibhriú sa Ghaeilge ag tosú le seachtain na Gaeilge agus moltar é seo.
- *Even though a clear structure and clear learning objectives were in evidence in the majority of lessons observed, a satisfactory standard in Irish is not being achieved by pupils in the middle and senior classes. Pupils in the junior classes have an appropriately wide vocabulary, but there is insufficient development of this vocabulary as pupils proceed through the school. The school is advised to put a structured programme in place directed towards a clearly defined standard that is to be expected at each class level. Even though some pupils are able to read a range of appropriate texts to a satisfactory level, there are other pupils for whom the texts are too difficult. Better provision needs to be made by teachers for these pupils. A systematic programme for the development of writing is also advocated. The school intends to work on enriching pupils' experience of Irish starting with Irish Week and this is commended.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is generally good. Pupils throughout the school have good oral language skills. The teaching of reading in the junior and middle classes is good with pupils demonstrating good phonological awareness skills. While pupils have good word-attack skills, a more equitable balance needs to be achieved between the development of phonological awareness skills and grapho-phonemic skills. In the senior classes, the reading attainment levels of a considerable number of pupils are poor. In these instances, the teaching of reading needs to focus on the systematic development of specific reading skills. In general, there is a good number of pupils throughout the school who demonstrate a satisfactory ability to write independently. The identification and teaching of specific writing skills in a systematic manner will enhance this ability particularly for more able pupils. The presentation of many pupils' written work in the middle and senior classes requires considerable improvement. This work needs to be monitored more rigorously by teachers and pupils encouraged to take greater pride in, and show greater commitment to, completing good quality work.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is generally good. Lessons observed during the inspection were purposeful and, in the majority of cases, lesson content was taught clearly. In all classes, pupils demonstrated a good ability to answer questions posed orally during the inspection. Attainment of pupils in written mathematics is good in some classes while requiring improvement in others. The ability of pupils in the senior classes to engage in written problem solving requires development particularly in terms of problem-solving requiring two calculations. In all classes, better provision could be made for more able pupils. Pupils in some classes need to engage in

more copybook work and the presentation of this work should be monitored more rigorously.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is good. Lessons observed during the inspection had a clear and appropriate focus and teachers demonstrated a good ability to develop pupils' contributions to discussion. In a questionnaire completed by pupils during the inspection, the majority of pupils responded positively to questions posed regarding their sense of well-being within their school.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement ranges from very good in some classrooms and learning support settings to requiring improvement in others. While lessons, generally, are appropriately focused and structured correctly they need to better target the range of ability levels in classrooms. More rigorous and on-going monitoring of pupils' learning is required if learning is to be optimised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with particular learning needs is good in some settings and requires development in others. Where support for pupils requires development, planning should be more detailed and correlate more closely to the needs of pupils. There is scope for increasing the involvement of parents in this planning process. Record-keeping also needs to be improved. The provision of support in group-settings should be increased to allow for peer-learning and the more effective development of social skills. A closer correlation with the mainstream classroom is required in order to optimise the impact of additional support for pupils. It is commendable that learning support provision is well resourced with a good range of appropriate materials available for teachers' use.

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