

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Conleth's Infant School, Naas Road,
Newbridge, Co.Kildare**

Uimhir rolla: 17873H

Date of inspection: 08 November 2013



1. Introduction

St. Conleth's Infant school is situated in Newbridge in Co. Kildare and is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It shares its campus with St. Conleth and Mary's Senior School. In addition to the sixteen mainstream classes the school has a pre-school ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) unit. The school caters for boys and girls up to first class. Approximately twenty percent of the 441 pupils enrolled do not have English as their first language. Overall attendance levels are very good, however, a cohort of pupils miss twenty days or more yearly. The school should continue to review and update attendance strategies with a view to improving the attendance levels of these pupils. 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.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings, five support teaching settings and the pre-school ASD unit.

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 principal and the in-school management team is of a very high standard.
- The quality of whole-school planning and the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commendable with some excellent practice observed.
- Supports for pupils with special educational needs is one of the school's significant strengths.
- The board of management is commended for the maintenance of the school to a very high standard and the provision of a wide range of resources to support teaching and learning.
- Relationships and communications are managed very successfully. The active and dedicated parents' association and parents overall are very supportive of the work of the school.
- Teachers interact with pupils in a very positive and affirming manner.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In consultation with all members of the school community, the board of management should review curriculum provision time for pupils in first classes.
- The school should review its existing arrangements for the recreational interval in the best interests of the pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is effective, and comprises members who possess a wide range of expertise which is used successfully in managing and supporting the work of the school. They ensure the building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard and play an active role in policy formation and review. The board should ensure consistency between the published and actual school assembly and starting time. Currently the school day for pupils in first class is the same as for pupils in junior and senior infants. While this arrangement is in compliance with the Department's regulations as set out in Circular 11/95 it is recommended that the board, in consultation with all members of the school community including parents and teachers, should carry out a formal review of the school day for first class. The review should examine the potential of how the increased curriculum time for the pupils, and contact time with their teachers, could be used to implement a broader and more balanced curriculum than is possible during the current school opening times.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is of a very high standard. The principal, who is an effective instructional leader, displays well-developed administrative and organisational skills which enable her to lead the school very successfully. The principal is supported by a very effective deputy principal and in-school management team. They successfully oversee the planning, delivery and monitoring of initiatives which have a positive impact on teaching and learning. The leadership roles of non-post holders are acknowledged.
- The management of resources is very time good. An extensive range of age-appropriate resources is expertly utilised by teachers. The school's playground, sensory garden and school garden are effective settings for Physical Education and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). The recently developed playroom is very well resourced to support the delivery of *Aistear*. Auxiliary staff carry out their duties conscientiously.
- The management of pupils is commendable. Teachers interact with pupils in a very positive and affirming manner and most pupils engage enthusiastically in learning activities. Currently there is no mid-morning break for pupils and they work in their classes from morning time until lunch break at 11:30. It is recommended that the school review this arrangement in the best interests of the pupils.
- Relationships and communications are managed very successfully. Home-school links are well developed with various forms of communication utilised. The active and dedicated parents' association is very supportive of the work of the school. Responses to questionnaires distributed to parents as part of the evaluation indicate that almost all parents are happy with the school, agree it is well run and that teaching is good in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning and the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very good. A comprehensive range of organisational and curriculum policies has been developed and reviewed collaboratively by all members of the school community. The school has produced its first SSE report and school improvement plan. The process has

been informed by parent and pupil questionnaires, assessment data and whole-school and individual teacher reflection.

- Good quality individual classroom planning is evident. Monthly short-term plans are based on objectives and are supported by a wide range of resources. To add impetus to effective short-term planning greater consideration should be given to planning for differentiation and to the inclusion of skills development and methodologies in SESE. It is recommended that teachers plan on a fortnightly basis in accordance with Rule 126 for National Schools. Very good planning is prepared by teachers in support settings, and, going forward, this should be presented on a weekly basis as recommended in the *Learning-Support Guidelines*.
- 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 quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commendable with some excellent practice observed. Very proficient classroom management skills are evident in most classrooms, and all teachers create stimulating and purposeful learning environments. Overall, lessons are well paced and structured; they incorporate a wide variety of resources and methodologies, and learning is consolidated. Where practice is at an optimal level, learning objectives are shared with the pupils. For the most part, the pupils are engaged in learning tasks and demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning. The school should continue to extend provision for differentiation in teaching and learning to support and challenge pupils further.
- Baineann éifeacht le caighdeán an teagasc, na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. Tá luas agus struchtúr maith sna ceachtanna. Úsáidtear dánta, cluichí, puipéidí agus amhráin chun teanga a mhúineadh. Baintear feidhm as obair bheirte go rialta chun teanga nua a chleachtadh. Ar an iomlán, tá stór leathan focail ag na daltaí. Is féidir leo ceisteanna simplí a fhreagairt go cumasach agus aithrisíonn siad agus canann siad rainn, dánta agus amhráin go muiníneach. Í roinnt suímh, ba chóir an stór focal agus an teanga a threisiú níos mó.
- *Effective teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evident in Irish. Lessons have good pace and structure. Poems, games, puppets and songs are used to teach language. Pair work is used regularly to practise new language learning. Overall, pupils have an extensive bank of words. They can answer simple questions capably and recite and sing a variety of poems and songs confidently. There is need for greater reinforcement of vocabulary and language in some settings.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good, with some very good practice observed. Through the use of rhymes, songs and the explicit teaching of phonics the school provides a solid foundation in phonological awareness for pupils. Early-reading skills are capably progressed through the use of individualised-reading programmes, and reading initiatives such as paired-reading and peer-reading. Almost all teachers evaluated model language effectively and teach oral language successfully in discrete lessons or through an integrated approach. In some instances there is need for a greater focus on planning for and teaching of explicit oral language skills. Teaching and learning in poetry is of a very high standard. Pupils recite a range of poems with good intonation, expression and enthusiasm. Pre-writing skills are well developed and some very good samples were noted.

- Effective teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is evident with some highly-effective practice observed. Where very effective practice was apparent it involved purposeful use of resources, activity-based learning, Mathematics language development and differentiated learning tasks. Provision for mental Mathematics is successful in all settings. Overall, pupils demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of Early Mathematical Activities and participate in tasks competently. Further use of targeted-group teaching and differentiated-learning tasks should be considered.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is of a high quality. Lessons incorporate good use of resources, the development of skills and practical hands-on activities. Some highly effective practice was observed whereby lessons began by eliciting the pupils' ideas on topics and these ideas were subsequently tested in appropriate investigations. Pupils were very knowledgeable about trees and animals in the school and local environment. Learning in the strand *Environmental Awareness and Care* is supported by the school's successful participation in the *Green Schools* and *Walk on Wednesday* initiatives.
- Good quality assessment records are evident in all settings. The school is commended for the use of a wide range of diagnostic assessments. Outcomes of assessment should be further utilised to inform differentiated planning and teaching.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is one of the school's significant strengths. It is characterised by very high quality teaching, active-learning methodologies, expert use of resources and ongoing assessment for and of learning. The pupils' education plans are based on their diagnosed learning needs and include specific targets which are supported by a range of strategies. Some very high quality in-class support involving station teaching was observed. Consideration should be given to extending this model to other classes. The *Reading Recovery* programme is systematically implemented with a number of targeted pupils.
- The school is welcoming and inclusive. Staff ensure a supportive environment that enables pupils with special educational needs and pupils who are learning English as an additional language to access the curriculum.
- Support for pupils learning English as an additional language is provided through a structured programme in a focussed and effective manner using stimulating resources and methodologies.
- The quality of teaching, learning and care in the pre-school ASD unit is highly commendable.

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 welcomes this Report, which affirms the high quality of management, planning teaching and learning in the School, and which notes that the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is a particular strength of the school. We would like to thank the staff and the whole school community and to congratulate them on the excellence of the report.

We thank the members of the inspection team for their professionalism and courtesy throughout the evaluation process.

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 notes the recommendations of the report, and has commenced the review processes recommended therein.

The Board suggests the publication of a new Circular, to ensure consistency of provision amongst all infant schools nationwide.