

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St Fintan's NS  
Mayglass, Bridgetown  
Co. Wexford  
Uimhir rolla: 18133S**

**Date of inspection: 18 April 2013**



## 1. Introduction

St Fintan's National School is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are 98 pupils enrolled and overall attendance levels are very good. The active promotion of punctuality and attendance is praised. 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 of management and parents' association are strongly committed to supporting the work and ongoing development of the school.
- The principal encourages a culture of teamwork and manages the work of the school successfully.
- The teachers engage in their work in a highly professional manner and are creative and innovative in responding to the pupils' diverse learning needs.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good and in general, commendable levels of pupil learning and achievement are in evidence.
- The management of pupils is very good and they present as enthusiastic and hard-working learners.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It would be beneficial to consider ways in which the school could involve parents more actively in relevant in-class activities.
- It is recommended that approaches to emergent reading and emergent writing in infant classes be reviewed and developed further.
- It is advised that real-life, collaborative and multi-stage problem solving be a regular feature of learning in Mathematics in all classes.
- In-class support for literacy and numeracy should be expanded to ensure greater provision for prevention and early intervention in infant and junior classes.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is strongly committed to supporting the work and ongoing development of the school. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and undertaken diligently. The board actively participates in the development of school policy. The introduction of information evenings for parents is commended as they help parents gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the work of the school. Teaching, learning

and pupil achievement matters are considered at intervals and it is now opportune that this aspect of the board's work is strengthened further.

- The principal encourages a culture of teamwork and manages the work of the school successfully. She has a clear vision for the school and has progressed, in cooperation with the teaching staff, a number of initiatives to improve pupil achievement. The members of the in-school management team fulfil their assigned responsibilities with great commitment and diligence. Their work contributes very positively to the range and quality of learning experiences. In the questionnaires, almost all parents expressed the view that the school is well run.
- High levels of collaboration between staff members are strongly in evidence and the contribution of support and ancillary staff is commended highly. An increasing range of teaching and learning resources, including ICT, is available and used effectively. The school building is well presented and the pupils' work contributes substantially to its attractiveness. Outdoor recreation space is of a very high quality and is extensively used and immaculately maintained.
- Home-school communication is of a high quality, with almost all parents reporting that the school is welcoming of parents. Parents are kept well informed regarding their children's progress and school activities. The parents' association is very committed to supporting the work of the school and provides invaluable support for a variety of school events. It also engages in extensive fundraising to provide a range of worthwhile resources. The support of parents in maintaining aspects of the school building and grounds is noteworthy. It would now be beneficial to consider ways in which the school could involve parents more actively in relevant in-class activities.
- The management of pupils is very good and positive pupil-teacher relationships are in evidence. The pupils present as enthusiastic and hard-working learners. In the questionnaires, almost all pupils confirmed that they get on well with the other children and that they can talk to a teacher if they are upset about something in school. The voluntary commitment of the teaching staff to provide a broad learning experience is praised, including extra-curricular sporting activities, instrumental music and French.

#### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- Under the leadership of the principal, significant progress has been made regarding school planning. An increasing range of curriculum plans and pertinent organisational policies are now in place. Positive development is also in evidence in the area of school self-evaluation.
- Each teacher engages in long-term and short-term planning and provides a monthly progress report. It is advised that these planning and reporting formats be standardised across mainstream and support teaching settings to aid the assessment of continuity and progression in 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

- The overall quality of teaching is very good and in general, commendable levels of pupil learning and achievement are in evidence. Lesson provision is well structured and differentiated to respond to the pupils' diverse learning needs. The teachers draw on a suitable range of teaching approaches including, in a number of classrooms, effective opportunities for the pupils to work collaboratively and direct their own learning. The questionnaire responses confirm that most pupils enjoy their lessons and learning. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents expressed the view that teaching is good in the school and that their child is doing well. A wide range of assessment modes to track individual pupil progress is in evidence and the outcomes of assessment are used well.
- Tugtar faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go díograiseach agus de bharr seo tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama go maith. Leagtar béim chuí ar fhorbairt scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí agus tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaith díobh abairtí a chumadh agus cumarsáid chruinn a dhéanamh, go háirithe sna hardranganna. Baintear úsáid inmholta as obair bheirte agus ról imirt i ranganna áirithe. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le brí agus le cruinneas oiriúnach. Moltar ábhar léitheoireachta sa bhreis a aidhmsiú anois chun a scileanna a chothú a thuilleadh fós. Múintear scileanna scríbhneoireachta go dícheallach agus tá caighdeán cuí á bhaint amach, agus ard-chaighdeán ag na daltaí sinsearach.

*The teaching of Irish is undertaken diligently and because of this the quality of teaching and learning is good. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' speaking skills and many of them are capable of structuring sentences and communicating accurately, especially in the senior classes. Commendable use is made of role play and pair work in particular classes. A majority of pupils read with appropriate meaning and accuracy. A wider range of reading material should now be acquired to improve the pupils' reading skills further. Writing skills are well taught and a suitable standard is achieved, with a high standard being attained by senior pupils.*

- In English, teaching, learning and pupil achievement is of a high quality. A majority of pupils express themselves confidently and competently. Sustained attention to developing their vocabulary store and higher-order thinking skills would be beneficial. The pupils demonstrate praiseworthy reading standards overall and most pupils report that they think they are doing well at reading. The school is commended highly for its transition to the use of individualised readers and class novels and the overt attention to discrete comprehension skills. In most classes, the pupils experience regular and successful exposure to writing in a range of genres. In addressing the school's current priority to improve literacy standards, it is recommended that approaches to emergent reading and emergent writing in infant classes be reviewed and developed further.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a commendable quality overall. New concepts are explored successfully through indepth talk and discussion, attention to mathematical language and skilful teacher questioning. Other praiseworthy features of provision include the promotion of mental maths and computation skills and the purposeful use of resources. Good levels of pupil understanding are in evidence and most pupils surveyed report that they think they are doing well at Mathematics. In order to strengthen problem-solving competence, it is advised that real-life, collaborative and multi-stage problem solving be a regular feature of work in all classes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is competent, with very good practice in evidence in some classes. Active and enjoyable song singing is a schoolwide feature. The pupils sing to a good standard, with praiseworthy development of literacy skills in some classes. Song singing is of a very high quality in the school choir and its work contributes very positively to a range of school celebrations. All pupils have an opportunity to hone their performance skills through the annual Christmas concert. They are provided with

regular opportunities to listen and respond to music and they display a growing awareness of musical elements and an increasing capacity to critique differing musical styles. Some opportunities for engaging in composing activity are provided. The pupils can access extra-curricular tin whistle and violin tuition and laudable progress is in evidence. It is now opportune that consideration be given to providing instrumental tuition on an in-school basis.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs is good. They experience their learning in a supportive and inclusive school environment and the quality of relationships between support teachers and pupils is praised highly. Lesson provision, both in-class and withdrawal, is well structured and resourced and takes account of the pupils' individual and shared learning needs. The introduction of well-designed, in-class support is commended and worthy of extension to ensure increased provision for prevention/early intervention. The pupils are making creditable progress overall in the achievement of their learning goals. In the pending review of the school's policy for learning support and resource provision, it is advised that attention be given to ensuring the full implementation of the continuum of support. It is further advised that the development and review of individualised/group education plans and the maintenance of pupil progress records are considered to ensure that effective practices observed during the evaluation are being implemented consistently.

*Published October 2013.*

# **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 Fintan's NS:

- Commends and thanks the Department of Education inspector for her courtesy and professionalism during the inspection
- Is pleased that the strengths of teamwork, and inclusiveness in our school were recognised
- Is pleased that the high level of teaching in core subjects and music was recognised
- Is pleased with the recognition of excellent working relationships in the school community.

#### **Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

With regard to the recommendations made in the report:

- Individualised and group English reading and writing programmes have been devised for the whole school next year and will be implemented in September
- Staff training is continuing in the area of problem solving in Mathematics and will be implemented in September
- Group and individual planning for SEN students has been reviewed and a new system put in place.