An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Lanesborough Primary School,
Lanesborough, Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla: 18259R

Date of inspection: 23 March 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Lanesborough Primary School was undertaken in March, 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Science. The board of management of the school 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Lanesborough Primary School is a co-educational school located in the town of Lanesborough, county Longford. The school has a strong tradition in music and participates in the Hallelujah Chorus, local church services and community events. The school opened in 1958 and became fully co-educational in September 2007. It celebrated its golden jubilee in 2008 and a commemorative booklet was published to mark the occasion. The school provides a variety of extra-curricular activities, including Cumann na mBunscol competitions and other sports programmes.

The following table provides an overview of the enrolment and staffing in the school at the time of the evaluation:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pupils enrolled in the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainstream classes in the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers on the school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainstream class teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers working in support roles</td>
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<td>Special needs assistants</td>
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1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision
Lanesborough Primary School is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise and the trusteeship of the Mercy Congregation. The characteristic spirit of the school, as outlined in the mission statement, is one of a caring community with an emphasis on the holistic development of the child. There is a welcoming atmosphere in the school.

1.2 Board of management
The board of management is properly constituted. Its experienced, industrious members are very effective in executing their duties and give generously of their time. The chairperson and other members of the board have a visible, supportive presence in the school. The board is commended on the smooth transition to a vertical co-educational school. Some good work was done recently on a review of safety procedures. The board is committed to collegiate whole-school planning. The board has availed of a number of grants towards the refurbishment of the school and the building and grounds are attractive and well maintained. Secretarial support is provided in the school for two mornings per week.
1.3 In-school management
The principal teacher performs her teaching and administrative duties very effectively. The school is in a period of transition. Excluding the post of principal, all other posts have changed in recent times. In September 2008, the board of management made two appointments. A mainstream classroom teacher was selected as the learning support/resource teacher and a new teacher was then assigned as the mainstream classroom teacher. The other mainstream classroom teacher was appointed in January 2010 due to the retirement of a long serving staff member. The principal is committed to building and strengthening her team. She facilitates good communication and staff meetings are held on a regular basis. It is recommended that the school engage in more collaborative planning. The arrangements necessary to facilitate this were discussed with the staff.

The role of deputy principal has been reassigned recently. It is recommended that the duties attached to this post be reviewed periodically so that they reflect the needs of the school.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community
The parents’ association makes a very valuable contribution to the school. It assists with the organisation of various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as the KneX Challenge, Gaelic football and swimming. The association issues newsletters to all parents and engages in discussions on school policies. Last year, the parents’ association arranged a book-rental scheme in collaboration with the senior class teacher. It is now reviewing costs of books for the entire school. This is commendable work. Each year, the association organises a range of events to raise funds for school equipment and activities. The parents’ association has successfully secured sponsorship for school events from various local sources.

The school has strong links with community groups and with the local post-primary school. The school choir and band perform at the annual carol service and at liturgical events during the year. The pupils participate successfully in art competitions, sporting events and quiz competitions.

1.5 Management of pupils
The pupils are motivated and interested in their work. They are respectful of their teachers and of each other. Yard duty is undertaken carefully. However, it is recommended that the pupils be escorted back to class by their class teacher at the end of recreation periods. It is recommended that school assemblies be held more frequently to provide a forum for the celebration of classroom achievements.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning
The quality of whole-school planning is very good. There is commendable collaboration by the teachers and good consultation with the educational partners prior to ratification of policies. A comprehensive range of organisational policies and procedures has been developed. It is recommended that a policy on information and communications technology (ICT) be developed further. Very good whole-school curriculum plans have been devised. However, there are modifications required, as outlined at the post-evaluation meeting.

The quality of classroom planning is very good. All of the classroom teachers present interesting programmes of learning and provide attractive, print-rich, motivating classrooms. The staff uses
common templates for short-term planning and monthly reports. It is recommended that the monthly report template be revised. The school has invested significantly in a range of resources for teaching and learning. It is recommended that an inventory of these resources be compiled to ensure that they are managed and used effectively in mainstream and special-education settings.

2.2 Child protection policy and procedures
Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Science Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools (Department of Education and Science, September 2001). Confirmation was also provided 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.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 Language
Gaeilge
Tugtar faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go díograiseach sa scoil. Tá tuiscint mhaith ag na daltaí. Baintear feidhmiú as rainn, amhráin, cluichí, puipéid, drámaíocht, rólímirt agus scéalaíocht chun na daltaí a spreagadh. Moltar úsáid níos mó a bhaint as scéalaíocht agus snáithe na héisteachta a mhúineadh go formiúil. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge go héifeachtach mar theanga bhainistíochta mar theanga bhainistíochta ar an ranga. Baintear úsáid as obair bheirte, as grúpobair agus as drámaíocht chun an cur chuige cumarsáideach a chur chun cinn. Moltar úsáid níos mó a bhaint as obair bheirte.

Tá caighdeán na léitheoireachta go maith. Ar an iomlán, léann na daltaí go muiníneach. B'fhíú cluichí léitheoireachta a eagrú chun cleachtadh a thabhairt do na daltaí ar na focail nua a úsáid. B’fhíú freisin teicneolaíocht faisnéise agus cumarsáide a úsáid chun le teagasc agus le foghlaím na léitheoireachta.

Tá taithí faighte ag na daltaí i raon leathan de thascanna scríbhneoireachta. Is inmholta na leabhair álainne atá scríofa ag na meánranganna ar ábhair éagsúla. Moltar scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach na ndaltaí a fhhorbairt a thuilleadh fós. Tá gá le foclóir nua a chur ar fáil dóibh mar thacaíocht sa scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach. Moltar athbhreithniú a bhéanamh ar an bpolasáí Gaeilge chun clár leanúnach a leagan amach don ghradamach, múineadh na mbriathra san áireamh, don scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach agus don léitheoireacht.

Irish
The teaching of Irish is undertaken diligently. The pupils display good understanding. Appropriate use is made of rhymes, songs, games, puppets, drama, role-play and storytelling to motivate the pupils. It is recommended that greater use be made of story and that the listening strand be taught in a structured way. Irish is used effectively as the language of the classroom. Use is made of pair work, group work and drama to promote the communicative approach. It is recommended that pair work be used more frequently in the school.

The standard of reading is good. Overall, the pupils read confidently. It would be beneficial to organise Irish games to give the pupils additional practice in using the new vocabulary. Pupils would benefit also from the use of ICT in the teaching and learning of reading.
The pupils have experience of a range of writing tasks. The books on different topics that have been written by pupils in the middle classes are praiseworthy. It is recommended that the pupils’ creative writing be developed further. There is a need to develop vocabulary that will support the pupils in creative writing. It is recommended that the Irish policy be revised so that it provides a continuous programme in grammar, including the use of verbs, creative writing and reading.

**English**

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of the pupils’ oral-language skills through story telling, poetry, drama, games and talk and discussion. It is recommended that the staff implement a listening programme as part of oral language. Both poetry and drama need to be developed further in the school.

Large-format books and the novel are both utilised effectively. A new phonics programme is being implemented successfully in the junior classes. The school should consider devising its own spelling programme to accord with the new phonics programme. Reading is promoted purposefully through attractive class libraries and silent-reading sessions. It is recommended that the school implement a paired-reading programme to support a selection of pupils. The reading lessons observed in the mainstream classrooms during the evaluation were effective. Successful station teaching was observed during the evaluation. There was creative use of games and activities. It is recommended that the staff focus even further on the development of grammar and reading comprehension.

Pupils have the opportunity to write in a number of genres. However, they would benefit from further guidance in process writing and in the use of challenging vocabulary. Many samples of pupils’ written work and project work are displayed in classrooms and corridors.

**3.2 Mathematics**

The lessons observed in Mathematics were very good. The majority of pupils are attaining well in the subject. All of the teachers presented well-structured, creative lessons. Concrete materials, games and effective strategies were employed. However, there needs to be a further investment in games and activities to support Mathematics. A good emphasis is placed on the language of mathematics and on number facts (tables). Mathematics trails are conducted occasionally but it is recommended that further trails be organised. Flipcharts and mini-whiteboards were used effectively during the evaluation. The use of these whiteboards on a more frequent basis in all settings would prove beneficial. While problem-solving activities are regularly included in the mathematics programme, there is an emphasis on written problems. It is recommended that there be a focus on verbalising mathematical problems and on making links between the various mathematical topics.

**3.3 Science**

The lessons observed in Science were very good. Appropriate emphasis was placed on the active involvement of the pupils in organised mixed-ability groups. The planning and preparation for the lessons in all classrooms are worthy of commendation. Teachers emphasise investigative learning and experiments and one of the teachers is now using materials from *Discover Primary Science* (DPS), with success. The wider use of the DPS materials across the school would be beneficial. Brainstorming is a praiseworthy feature of lessons observed. Discussion is complemented by a range of active-learning approaches. The school has received its third green flag as part of the Green-Schools Programme. The school has many habitats, attractive flowerbeds and flower boxes, all of which support the programme of work in the school.
3.4 Assessment
The quality of assessment is good. A range of assessment tools is used to inform teaching and learning. This includes work samples, test results, profiles of pupils and anecdotal records. It is recommended that all teachers record pupils’ progress in all curricular areas. Currently, standardised tests are administered in English reading and Mathematics annually. Pupils’ results are recorded systematically.

4. Quality of Support for Pupils

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs
A policy on the provision of learning support and special education has been formulated during this academic year. The school has one learning-support/resource teacher, who is based in the school but shares time with another local school. A resource teacher for pupils of the Traveller community (RTT) works in the school on one afternoon per week.

Overall, the quality of planning and preparation for learning-support and resource teaching is poor and needs to be reviewed. While individual learning plans have been prepared for pupils, there is scope for improvement in the quality of these plans. During the evaluation, there were no short-term plans or progress records available for inspection. It is important that planning and preparation ensures that pupils’ learning experiences and progress are positive. The quality of teaching observed was adequate in some respects but there was an over-reliance on the use of textbooks. Rapport with the pupils was good but teaching and learning would benefit from the use of more progressive approaches and methodologies. A library of reference materials regarding special educational needs should be established. Presentation of the support-teaching room should be improved: there is a need for an attractive, well-resourced, print-rich, and number-rich learning environment.

The learning-support/resource teacher provides in-class support in Mathematics in one classroom on a daily basis. This is a recent development which is proving successful. An early-intervention programme should be formulated and implemented. A special-needs assistant works with one pupil and co-operates effectively with the teachers.

4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups
Planning and preparation for the pupils working with the RTT is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is commendable. Dedicated, targeted support is provided in a caring learning environment. Activities such as drama, project work and circle work are organised purposefully to meet the needs of the pupils. Very good use is made of pictures, posters, games and interactive learning to support the pupils’ learning. There is good consultation with the mainstream class teacher.

5. Conclusion
The school has strengths in the following areas:

- The board of management and the parents’ association work effectively and collaboratively on behalf of the school.
- The pupils are taught in a safe, secure environment. The school atmosphere is welcoming and open.
The mainstream classroom teachers work assiduously to present interesting programmes of learning and provide attractive, motivating classrooms for their pupils.

The school is led by a diligent and dedicated principal teacher.

The overall teaching of oral Irish, Mathematics and Science is very good.

The following key recommendations are made in order to further improve the quality of education provided by the school:

- It is recommended that a policy on ICT be developed further.
- Moltar athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an bpolasaí Gaeilge chun clár leanúnach a leagan síos don ghramadach, múineadh na mbriathra san áireamh, don scribhneoireacht chruthaitheach agus don léitheoireacht.
  
  It is recommended that the Irish policy be revised so that it provides a continuous programme in grammar, including the use of verbs, creative writing and reading.
- It is recommended that the approaches and methodologies used in the teaching of English spellings, comprehension, creative writing, phonics and grammar be reviewed.
- The school should ensure that there is appropriate planning and recording of the supplementary teaching provided for pupils with additional and special educational needs. Presentation of the support-teaching room should be improved.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.

Published, December 2010
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 accept the findings and recommendations in this report. The Board will continue to support its staff in the provision of a broad based balanced curriculum, that is appropriate to the needs of the pupils in its care, in partnership with parents The Board would like to thank all staff, parents and pupils for their co-operation and efforts in preparing for the WSE

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 has reviewed the recommendations outlined in the WSE report and has formulated an Action Plan, developed in consultation with the teaching staff. This Action Plan is being implemented at present