

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Ballycushion National School
Kilconly, Tuam, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 18876S**

Date of inspection: 27 September 2013



1. Introduction

Ballycushion National School is a co-educational primary school situated in the parish of Kilmaine, Co. Mayo. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam.

The school has two mainstream class teachers. There are 34 pupils enrolled. Pupils' attendance patterns are very good. The school was extended and extensively refurbished recently. School facilities are now very good..

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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 board of management is very supportive of the work of the school.
- There is a positive and homely learning atmosphere in the school. The school is a focal point for the local community.
- The school building and grounds have been developed to provide an attractive and stimulating learning environment.
- The principal is doing very good work in developing a vibrant school and in ensuring that all pupils benefit from education.
- Each member of the school staff works hard to provide a broad and balanced education for the pupils.
- A good standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evident in the curricular areas evaluated.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A school-wide approach to classroom planning should be adopted to ensure that teachers provide regular long-term and short-term plans for each curricular area.
- More emphasis should be placed on improving the structure and content of Mathematics lessons to make them more interesting and stimulating for pupils.
- The learning-support and resource service should be reviewed to achieve a better balance between English and Mathematics and to place more emphasis on early intervention.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and meets regularly. The board is very supportive of the work of the school. Board members have been assigned a range of specific roles. While the school's accounts are well maintained, there is a need to have these certified annually, in accordance with the Education Act 1998. The board's main priority is to continue to improve the school's facilities and resources, and to enhance the pupils' educational experience.
- Since commencing in her role in 2010, the principal has overseen a wide range of improvements in the school, including the refurbishment of the building and the provision of teaching resources to enhance the implementation of the curriculum. The principal is very committed to her work and displays great energy and diligence in carrying out her administrative, management and teaching duties.
- Each teacher in the school is committed to providing a broad and balanced education for pupils. The teachers demonstrate a willingness to implement change and to continually strive to improve standards.
- The work of the part-time secretary, as well as the work of the part-time caretaker, makes a very valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.
- There is no parents' association in the school. Notwithstanding the good relationships evident between parents and the school, it is recommended that a parents' association be established. As a small school with a homely atmosphere, rooted in the local community, parents are very actively involved in a variety of school activities and events. The results of parents' questionnaires indicate that overall parents are happy with the school. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually to discuss pupils' progress. A written report on the progress of their children is sent to parents at the end of each school year.
- The quality of pupil management in the school is good. Pupils at each class level eagerly participate in the activities and lessons organised. Pupils' questionnaires indicate that they think this is a good school and that they enjoy their lessons.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The whole-school planning process is good. An appropriate range of administrative and curricular policies has been developed. While these are regularly reviewed by the teachers and the board of management, it is recommended that parents be given a more meaningful role in policy development in the future.
- The school has begun the process of self-evaluation. Pupils' oral language development has been identified as the area for improvement. Parent surveys have been conducted to ascertain their views and enlist their support. Strategies are being implemented to improve standards in pupils' enunciation, presentation and general speaking skills.
- Each teacher prepares long-term and short-term plans for most curricular areas. Much of this work is good, with some aspects being very good. There is a need, however, to ensure that plans are always provided for each curricular area. A monthly record of the work covered is maintained.

- A good range of assessment modes is in place in the school. The school has recently begun to analyse assessment data and to compare results with national norms.
- Confirmation was provided by the school authorities that the Board of Management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, without modification or amendment, 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 teaching and learning across the curricular areas observed is good, with some very good teaching and learning evident. Each teacher employs a variety of effective teaching methods. In particular, the teachers demonstrate great skill in dealing with the different class grades in each classroom. Each teacher regularly monitors and corrects pupils' written work.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Baintear úsáid as modhanna múinte éagsúla éifeachtacha chun spéis na ndaltaí a mhúscailt sa Ghaeilge. Forbraítear an teanga labhartha go héifeachtach agus tugtar aire do mhúineadh na filíochta. Leagtar béim chuí ar mhúineadh na mbunabairtí sna ranganna uile. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith agus tá sé soiléir go dtuigeann siad an méid atá léite. Tá saothar maith cruthaitheach agus feidhmiúil le sonrú i scríbhneoireacht na ndaltaí.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A variety of effective teaching methods is used to motivate pupils' interest in Irish. Oral language is well developed and the teaching of poetry is given due attention. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the teaching of basic sentences in each class. Pupils' reading standards in Irish are good and it is clear that they understand what they have read. Good creative and functional work is evident in pupils' writing.

- The quality of the teaching and learning of English is good throughout the school. Due attention is given to developing pupils' oral language skills. This work is being further enhanced as part of the school's self-evaluation process. Reading is well taught and pupils clearly enjoy listening to and responding to stories and poems. The implementation of a more structured programme of early intervention strategies, however, should assist in further raising standards. Class libraries are well-stocked with a wide variety of books. Pupils' creative and functional writing in a variety of genres is of a high quality. Pupils' handwriting is very good at each class level.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Some very good practice is evident. Lessons are effectively differentiated to cater for the needs of each class group, although it would be worthwhile introducing lessons and activities in a more stimulating way in some cases. A mathematics-rich environment is evident in classrooms and throughout the school. Active learning and concrete materials are effectively used to inculcate concepts. It is recommended, however, that attention be given to improving pupils' interest in Mathematics and to enhancing their enjoyment of this curricular area.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in SPHE is good, with much very good work evident. The school places great emphasis on this curricular area. Lessons are well-structured and provide pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their social and personal skills through a variety of activities, including role play and discussion.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall quality of teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs is good. A good range of assessment, monitoring and planning documentation is available for each pupil receiving support. The learning-support and resource provision should be reviewed, however, to focus on achieving a better balance between the service provided for English and for Mathematics. It is also recommended that the programme of early intervention be expanded, to address pupils' needs as soon as possible when they start school.

Published February 2014