

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Talbot Senior National School
Bawnogue, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 19510E**

Date of inspection: 15 October 2010



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

1. Introduction

Talbot Senior National School is a twenty-three teacher, catholic, co-educational school catering for pupils from third class to sixth class. It is under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and participates in Band 1 of DEIS, the Department of Education and Skills initiative for educational inclusion. The attendance level of the pupils is very good with the school achieving notable success in targeting attendance as a priority in its DEIS action plan. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The quality of leadership provided by the principal and in-school management team is excellent.
- The board of management fulfils its duties to a high standard.
- The staff in this school, including the principal, teachers, special needs assistants (SNAs), home school community liaison (HSCL) officer and the support teacher, work collaboratively and skilfully to provide a good quality, all-round education for all the pupils in its care.
- Talbot Senior National School presents as a self-reflective school in which school self-evaluation is well established.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is very good. Excellent use is made of the local environment in implementing the science curriculum.
- The management of pupils is excellent. An inclusive, equitable and stimulating learning environment exists at all class levels.
- The school values and actively promotes purposeful and effective parental involvement in education.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Approaches to the teaching of reading should be reviewed to incorporate differentiated provision for pupils with varying reading abilities.
- It is recommended that the pupils are challenged appropriately in all strands of the mathematics programme and that the current model of team teaching in Mathematics be developed to greater facilitate differentiated teaching and learning.
- To enhance the learning experiences for all the pupils, it is recommended that the teachers provide more opportunities for paired activities, co-operative group tasks and scaffolded discovery learning in lessons.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions very effectively. It is commended for actively engaging in the school development planning process and for its work towards achieving the targets in the DEIS action plan.
- The quality of leadership provided by the principal is excellent. His distributed form of leadership in curricular, organisational and pastoral areas is significant in enabling all staff members to give of their best in all school activities. In line with the school's ethos, attention to the pastoral needs of the pupils and their families is a very positive feature of his practice. The work of the in-school management team is highly effective. They successfully lead the implementation and review of whole-school programmes.
- The management of pupils is excellent. A positive, respectful atmosphere is evident throughout the school. The code of behaviour is complemented by the teachers' impressive classroom management skills, the expertly-facilitated circle time, and the well-established restorative practice. The student council and green school's committee enable the pupils to be involved in decision-making and give them a voice.
- Well-maintained classrooms and communal areas of the school host an impressive range of visually-stimulating and purposeful displays. The caretaker and cleaners provide a secure and clean school environment. The secretary carries out a range of administrative duties very competently. Provision for information and communications technology (ICT), and teaching aids and resources is very good.
- The management of relationships and communications with the school community is of a high standard. The parents' association actively supports the work of the school through fundraising and engagement with policy development. An extensive range of meaningful initiatives for involving parents in the life of the school is facilitated through the HSCL programme.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the whole-school planning process is very good. A range of comprehensive policies have been developed collaboratively by all members of the school community. These are regularly reviewed at in-school committee level and board of management level. A cohesive DEIS action plan, setting out clear targets, forms the basis for comprehensive programmes of learning.
- All teachers prepare long-term and short-term plans. In the best instances, these plans identify clear learning objectives and reflect agreed whole-school approaches. It is recommended that short-term plans include explicit provision for differentiation in the teaching of reading and Mathematics. The practice whereby curriculum coordinators and the principal review monthly progress reports is commended.
- Talbot Senior National School presents as a self-reflective school in which school self-evaluation is well established. The whole-school approach to the implementation of the DEIS action plan has had a positive impact on aspects of the pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy in recent years. The school has made very good use of attendance data and feedback from parents in the setting of targets. Further use of the outcomes of assessment in the target-setting process for literacy and numeracy is advised.

Child protection policy and procedures

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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Particular features of competent practice include the highly effective use of the environment, ICT and the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary. Competent whole-class teaching is the predominant methodology utilised with some provision made for effective pair work and group work. To enhance the learning experience for all pupils, it is recommended that the teachers provide more opportunities for paired activities, co-operative group tasks and scaffolded discovery learning in lessons.
- Múintear an Ghaeilge go héifeachtach. Tá téamaí an churaclaim múinte go comhsheasmach ar fud na scoile. Tá struchtúir an mhaith ar na gceachtanna agus tugtar deiseanna do na daltaí teanga nua, foclóir agus struchtúir nua a úsáid. Tá réimse leathan d'ábhair léitheoireachta ag an scoil; ba chóir na leabhair sin a úsáid go seasamhach tríd an scoil. Tá caighdeán cumasach ag na daltaí i labhairt agus i scríobh na Gaeilge. Bíonn fonn orthu cumarsáid a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge agus is féidir leo ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Aithrisíonn agus canann na daltaí réimse leathan rainn agus amhráin go muiníneach i ngach rang. Cuirtear ranganna Gaeilge d'ard chaighdeán ar fáil do thuismitheoirí.

The teaching of Irish is very good. A whole-school approach is adopted in the teaching of the themes of the curriculum. Lessons are very well structured and provide opportunities for the pupils to acquire and apply new language, vocabulary and structures. The school has a good range of reading material, these books should be utilised consistently throughout the school. The standard of the pupils' achievement in speaking and writing is competent. The pupils are very willing to communicate in Irish and most pupils can ask as well as answer questions. They recite and sing a very good range of poems and songs confidently in all classes. High-quality Irish language classes are provided for parents.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. A whole-school approach to the writing of genres is led successfully by the curriculum co-ordinator and implemented consistently by all teachers. The pupils' writing is celebrated through classroom displays. To build upon this effective practice, pupils should be enabled to redraft their work in light of formative feedback. The pupils engage successfully in structured oral language activities, are responsive to questioning and engage confidently in discussions relating to topics and aspects of the curriculum.
- The school is currently reviewing its approach to the teaching of reading. In light of this, the school has a cohesive approach to the teaching of comprehension strategies and is beginning to implement the *First Steps Reading Programme*. To facilitate differentiated provision for pupils of all abilities, the pupils should be enabled to develop specific reading skills using reading-age appropriate and interest-appropriate texts. It is recommended that strategies for differentiation in reading be employed. The support of

the SEN team should be considered in this regard. The school has also in place a number of effective programmes to promote literacy among parents.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. The teachers present well-structured and well-resourced lessons. Due emphasis is placed on the acquisition and usage of mathematical language. Some classes are making explicit provision for problem-solving strategies and this should be extended to all classes. The learning support team provides in-class support to all classes daily. It is recommended that this model of support be developed to ensure it facilitates greater provision for differentiated teaching and learning in Mathematics.
- Science is taught to a very good standard. Excellent use is made of resources including the local environment in lessons. A good balance is achieved between the acquisition of scientific knowledge and the development of skills through the science programme. The concept of fair testing is reinforced consistently throughout the school. High levels of pupil engagement and enthusiasm are evident in lessons. The school has won numerous awards with the *Discover Primary Science* programme and is working towards its fourth flag with the *Green Schools' Initiative*.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The delivery of supports to pupils in special educational needs settings is characterised by skill and kindness. Individual education plans are devised in partnership with relevant personnel and are implemented in collaboration with class teachers, support teachers and SNAs. Overall the standard of teaching in support settings is high and the pupils engage actively in appropriate learning tasks.
- This is an inclusive, open and welcoming school in which successful supports are put in place to ensure equality of access to and participation in all aspects of school life. The shared responsibility among the principal, class teachers, support teachers, HSCL co-ordinator, school completion co-ordinator and SNAs for ensuring that each child's educational needs are fulfilled is commendable. A strong holistic dimension to the support is provided both at in-school level and through the provision of additional programmes.

Published February 2011

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 Talbot Senior National School on behalf of the school community would like to express its gratitude to the inspectorate of the DES for the professional courtesy extended to us during the recent WSE. We found the process to be positive and encouraging. We are committed to implementing the recommendations outlined in the report.

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

(1) Our Literacy Committee and staff have undertaken a review of approaches to the teaching of reading to incorporate differentiated provision for pupils with various reading abilities. An electronic book/library tracking system has been installed. Staff have availed of in-service provided by the Professional Development Services for teachers in relation to First Steps. A graded reading system is being piloted in some classes. Paired reading activities according to reading ages have been organised.

(2) Our Numeracy Committee and staff are reviewing our current model of team teaching in Mathematics in order to facilitate greater differentiation in response to assessment. We will continue to challenge pupils appropriately in all strands of the mathematics programme.