

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**St Cronan's Senior NS**  
**Brackenstown, Swords, Co. Dublin**  
**Uimhir rolla: 19535U**

**Date of inspection: 20 September 2012**



## 1. Introduction

St Cronan's Senior National School is a co-educational school, under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It caters for boys and girls from classes third to sixth. The current enrolment is 603 pupils. Attendance levels are very good. During the whole-school evaluation provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Drama was inspected. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in eleven mainstream class settings and seven support teaching settings. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school benefits from the strategic management of the board of management and from the support of its active parents' association.
- The school principal and in-school management team undertake their responsibilities in a very organised fashion, making an important contribution to the effective running of the school.
- The school's staff is very conscientious, approaching their work in an enthusiastic and caring way, and presenting lessons in an engaging and stimulating manner.
- The school is presented in a very stimulating manner, with commendable emphasis on the celebration of pupils' work.
- Pupils conduct themselves in an excellent manner. Teachers interact with them in a warm and nurturing manner in both mainstream and special education contexts.
- The school staff is reflective, engaging purposefully and regularly in self-evaluation practices.
- Pupils complete and present their work to a high standard. Teachers' continuous and informative feedback on such work is of a high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the current in-class support paradigms be further developed and extended.
- Chun cur lena gcumas cainte i nGaeilge, ní mór níos mó béime a chur ar ábhar teanga níos dúshlánaí agus níos céimnithe. *To further develop their language competencies in Irish, greater emphasis should be placed on language content which is more challenging and developmental.*
- To complement a number of recent valuable initiatives in the field of literacy, it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the differentiation of reading material.

### 3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed by a committed and effective board of management. Meetings are held regularly. School accounts are audited annually. The board is strategic in its approach to its work, being concerned with a range of school matters which include health and safety, the development of school policies, staff and resource development and the promotion of an inclusive school culture.
- The school is led by a reflective, enthusiastic and prudent principal. She undertakes her role in a very organised and proactive manner, fostering a positive school atmosphere and actively empowering staff to engage with new initiatives. She is ably supported by a dynamic in-school management team. Duties are regularly reviewed. The team undertakes its duties in a focused and collaborative manner.
- The staff is very proactive in developing a wide range of colourful, stimulating and interactive resources. Teachers regularly undertake professional development courses and share their learning with colleagues.
- The management of pupils is excellent. The courteous, respectful and affirming manner in which school staff interacts with pupils serves to cultivate a nurturing atmosphere where the pupils are both content and stimulated.
- High quality norms of communication exist in the school. For example the use of fliers, newsletters and the school website contributes to effective communication between the school and its community.

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

- The quality of school planning is very good. Recent progress in developing pupils' listening and mathematical skills is testament to purposeful self-evaluation practices. The school regularly reviews policies and works collaboratively to devise detailed curricular policies. These policies clearly delineate content to be covered in a specific and progressional manner. A wide range of user-friendly and explicit organisational policies have also been compiled.
- All teachers devise long and short-term plans which are detailed and clearly delineate content to be covered. Such plans are frequently and commendably supported by the use of daily notes. Detailed monthly reports are also written.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil. I gcuid mhaith de na ranganna baintear feidhm rialta agus éifeachtach as an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí an-taitneamh as na ceachtanna agus glacann siad páirt fionnmhar iontu. Baineann na hoidí úsáid chruthaitheach as fearais éagsúla chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Úsáidtear straitéisí éagsúla éifeachtacha ar nós: obair bheirte,

drámaíocht agus scéalaíocht chun cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Tá sé ar a gcumas abairtí simplí a chur le chéile agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt go muiníneach. Chun cur lena scileanna teanga, ní mór níos mó béime a chur ar ábhar teanga níos dúshlánaí agus níos céimnithe. Baintear feidhm thairbheach as an bhfilíocht chun an teanga a shaibhriú. Léann na ndaltaí le cruinneas. Scríobhann na daltaí cleachtaí scríbhneoireachta feidhmiúla den chuid is mó. B'fhiú deiseanna breise saorchumadóireachta a sholáthar dóibh ar bhonn rialta.

- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory. Informal Irish is used regularly and effectively in many classrooms. It is evident that pupils derive great enjoyment from the lessons and they participate eagerly in them. Teachers make creative use of various resources to stimulate pupils' interest. Various strategies such as: drama, pair work and storytelling are used effectively to develop pupils' communication skills. Pupils are capable of constructing simple sentences and can ask and answer questions confidently. To further develop their language skills, more emphasis should be placed on more challenging and progressively incremental language. Poetry is purposefully used to enhance pupils' language. Pupils can read with accuracy. In the main, pupils practise functional writing. It would be worthwhile to afford pupils more regular opportunities to engage in independent creative writing.
- The standard of teaching and learning in English is good as the school adopts a focused and deliberate approach to delivering the curriculum. Provision for the development of pupils' language skills is commendable as it takes cognisance of the wide range of language needs. Considerable attention is given to poetry as a means of enriching pupils' expressive and receptive language. The school has appropriately identified the development of literacy as a priority for school improvement. They have established a number of valuable whole-school initiatives which focus on the development of specific skills such as comprehension and on the improvement of particular pupils' achievement in reading. To complement these valuable initiatives, it is recommended that reading material for these pupils be more clearly differentiated. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in process writing in a variety of genres. Some particular examples of very effective practice in terms of editing strategies were noted during the inspection and it is recommended that the school investigate opportunities for extending such good practice. The quality of pupils' penmanship and work presentation is of a high standard.
- Pupils are making suitable progress in Mathematics and the standard of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are delivered in a lively, focused and engaging manner. Teachers cleverly connect content with the experience and environment of the pupils. A mathematics-rich environment is created for learning. Collaborative learning activities which involve the use of concrete materials and information and communication technology (ICT) are used creatively to provide pupils with opportunities to discuss and examine concepts. Good differentiation practices are in place. In the main, pupils are encouraged to ask questions, although there is potential for further provision in this regard. Plenary sessions and discussion are used appropriately with good provision for problem solving, reasoning and communication. Pupil progress is consistently monitored through the use of teacher observation, tasks and mathematics tests.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is very good. The comprehensive whole-school plan for Drama supports its effective implementation as a discrete curricular area while also supporting its purposeful integration with other areas. A wide range of teaching strategies is successfully used to stimulate pupils' creativity and to facilitate their exploration and expression of emotions. Pupils demonstrate appropriate confidence and conviction when they act within character roles and are enabled to reflect on experiences outside of roles. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to work co-operatively and

collaboratively to explore the key elements of drama. Drama agreements and contracts are used effectively to support activities.

- Teachers approach their work in a careful, enthusiastic and purposeful manner, creatively designing lessons with commendable emphasis on hands-on resources and active pupil involvement. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is good, with pupils enjoying an engaging and stimulating learning experience. They apply themselves to tasks with focus and enthusiasm, completing and presenting their work to a high standard.

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

- Support teachers approach their work in a systematic and structured manner, providing for pupils with special educational needs in numeracy, literacy and English as an additional language (EAL). Very good provision is in place for the use of the staged approach and for the deployment of special education leaders at each class level. A range of assessment data is used to select pupils in need of additional help. While individual education plans (IEPs) are well constructed overall, in some instances, there is scope for the more specific delineation of targets.
- Support sessions are delivered in an engaging, warm and nurturing manner, with teachers carefully preparing the relevant activities and resources. Pupils are benefiting from the supports provided. In recent times, the school has been developing approaches to providing in-class support. In building on such good practice, it is recommended that the current in-class support paradigms be further extended and developed.
- The school benefits from the support of a school completion programme. This programme provides support on a number of fronts.
- Provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and mild general learning disability is very good. A suitable combination of teaching and learning approaches is used effectively to meet pupils' individual learning needs and to address the triad of impairments. An integrated inclusive learning experience, including opportunities for integration into mainstream classes, provides effective support for these pupils. Their progress is closely monitored across all domains.

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