

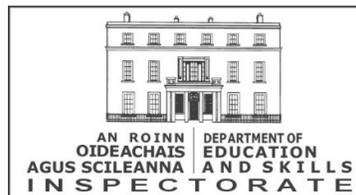
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

**Saint Paul's Senior National School
Rathmullen, Drogheda, County Louth
Roll number: 19678T**

Date of Evaluation: 10 May 2016



1. INTRODUCTION

Saint Paul's is a senior, co-educational primary school located in Drogheda, County Louth. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school is included in Band 1 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Overall, attendance rates of the 442 pupils are very good. In May 2016, a whole-school evaluation (WSE) was carried out during which inspectors observed teaching and learning in twelve mainstream classes, six special educational needs settings, one class for pupils with specific learning disability (SLD) and one class for pupils with severe emotional and behaviour disorders (SEBD). The WSE focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts. 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 **key findings**:

- School management and leadership are efficient and strongly focused on pupils' pastoral development. An atmosphere of mutual respect is evident across the school.
- Whole-school curriculum plans offer general guidance for teaching and assessment. All teachers provide adequate short-term planning and monthly progress records.
- Tá scóp chun forbartha ó thaobh cháilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge. (*There is scope to develop the quality of teaching and learning in Irish.*)
- Pupils' achievement in Mathematics is good and the quality of teaching and learning in Visual Arts is satisfactory.
- There is need to provide richer language and literacy development opportunities for pupils; currently, opportunities for pupils in this regard are inconsistent.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is satisfactory in most settings.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management, the principal and the in-school management team should engage in more focused monitoring of literacy and numeracy targets to improve learning outcomes.
- All planning and assessment processes should be developed further to guide school improvement effectively.
- A whole-school, fully integrated approach to language and literacy teaching in English and Irish should be developed.
- School management and leadership should ensure that staff in the SEBD setting are supported appropriately so as to optimise pupil outcomes and experiences.

3. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of school management is good. The board of management meets regularly and matters of finance, school organisation and policy review are discussed. In recent years, the board has overseen the development of a new school building which is nearing completion. Going forward, the board should place greater focus on curriculum review in the context of more robust school self-evaluation (SSE) practices.
- The principal promotes an inclusive school culture and places a core focus on pupils' well-being. She demonstrates strong organisational skills and maintains effective relationships with the wider school community. In questionnaire responses, almost all teachers indicated that there is a good atmosphere in the school. In light of the need to bring about improvement in literacy, greater monitoring of learning outcomes should now become a key focus of the principal's leadership.
- The in-school management (ISM) team carries out its assigned duties efficiently. Procedures are in place to ensure that resources, communication of updates and the maintenance of associated records are managed appropriately. While duties have recently been amended, more attention should be given to assuring that school improvement targets are realised.
- The school has a good variety of resources to support teaching. Many classroom and corridor displays support learning positively and celebrate pupils' achievements. There is scope to provide a broader range of resources for literacy and for information and communication technology (ICT) for pupils. Ancillary staff members contribute significantly to the efficient functioning of the school.
- The management of pupils is good and an atmosphere of mutual respect was evident across the school during the evaluation. In questionnaires administered to pupils during the evaluation, most agreed that they liked their school. Consideration should be given to developing the pupil voice through, for example, the establishment of a pupil council.
- Good communication between home and school is sustained through regular newsletters and a school website. Findings from the parents' questionnaires indicate that the school is a welcoming place and that arrangements for parent-teacher meetings are good. The parents' association provides valuable support to the school through engagement in the organisation of special occasions, fundraising and policy review.

4. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- There is scope for development with regard to certain aspects of school planning. A broad range of curricular and administrative plans has been formulated and reviewed periodically. While whole-school curriculum plans offer general guidance for teaching and assessment, they should be further developed to include specific progression and skill development.
- The school has engaged actively with the SSE process. Reviews of literacy, numeracy and Physical Education have been undertaken. Going forward, improvement targets require refining to identify clear and measurable learning goals for all pupils. The further development of teachers' monthly progress records, to enable the tracking of school improvement initiatives, should be considered.
- The overall quality of classroom planning has scope for development. While all teachers provide short-term planning, the delineation of specific skill-based learning objectives is recommended. There is need to outline how differentiation in lessons is to be achieved. Appropriate assessment strategies should be planned which enable teachers to evaluate the quality of the learning outcomes.
- There has been some good work undertaken in the development of assessment approaches. Standardised tests in English and Mathematics are administered. Assessment folders for individual pupils are maintained and, during the evaluation, it was noted that most pupils' written

work was consistently corrected. Commendably, some teachers promote peer and self-assessment. The school should develop *assessment for learning* in all subjects.

- 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 cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge le forbairt. Baineann na múinteoirí feidhm as roinnt ábhar léirithe agus cluichí teanga chun suim a mhúscailt sna daltaí. Baintear úsáid as Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil i roinnt ranganna, cleachtas gur fiú a leathnú. Is gá deiseanna fhíor-chumarsáide a sholáthar. Chun tógáil go céimniúil ar fhorbairt teanga na ndaltaí, b'fhiú plean céimnithe a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm. I roinnt ranganna, forbraítear scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí go cuí; moltar na heispéireis léitheoireachta a leathnú.

There is scope to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Irish. Teachers use some visual aids and language games to promote pupils' interest. Informal Irish is used in some classes, a practice that should be extended. It is necessary to provide pupils with opportunities to engage in using the language communicatively. It would be worthwhile to devise and systematically implement an incremental whole-school oral plan. In some classes, pupils' reading competence in Irish is developed appropriately; developmental reading experiences should be extended.

- There is scope to develop the overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English. Some pupils express themselves competently; development of more precise language skills to enhance the speaker-listener relationship and challenge all pupils' higher-order thinking is needed. Many pupils display weak reading abilities and, while differentiated reading texts are provided, teachers do not consistently listen to pupils read. Whole-school approaches to literacy instruction should now be reviewed. The introduction of guided reading approaches as a basis for the teaching of reading should be prioritised. A whole-school approach to writing enables pupils to write in a variety of genres. In some instances, teachers scaffold the editing process and enable the pupils to refine their drafts in the light of formative feedback, using a richer and more precise vocabulary. It is recommended that this good practice informs whole-school policy.
- The overall standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Pupils display positive attitudes towards the subject. In some classes, discrete emphasis is placed on the acquisition and use of mathematical language in a range of differentiated and stimulating activities. Effective team teaching, incorporating the productive use of manipulatives, ensures continually improving outcomes in these settings. Further activity-based learning would enhance provision in some classes. The use of differentiated and open-ended problem solving, where pupils explain their mathematical thinking, is recommended.
- There is scope to develop aspects of the teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts. All pupils enjoy making Art individually and collaboratively. Some teachers use a variety of stimuli as the starting point for art lessons. Greater consideration should be given to systematically teaching the elements, skills and language of the Visual Arts across the school. There is scope to provide access to a wider variety of art styles and artists from different times and cultures.
- There is scope to develop the overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement. Some teachers make effective use of a wide range of active and collaborative teaching approaches. In some settings, teaching was observed to be of a high standard evidenced by purposeful, stimulating and appropriately challenging lessons with clear learning intentions. In a number of other instances, however, there was scope to engage and challenge pupils to a much greater extent.

6. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- Overall, provision for pupils with special education needs (SEN) is good. High-quality work was observed when teaching was focused and learning was active. The SEN team are beginning to develop structured and purposeful in-class supports. There is a need for more regular recording of progress in these settings to inform future planning. Good use is made of station teaching in a number of classrooms and *Maths Recovery* is implemented skilfully. Some individual education plans (IEPs) have specific, measurable and time-bound targets. Other plans lack clear learning objectives. A more consistent whole-school approach should be adopted.
- Overall support for pupils who learn English as an additional language (EAL) is good. In withdrawal settings, a broad suite of EAL listening, speaking, reading and writing activities is provided. Greater focus should now be placed on the specific skills that pupils need to access learning particularly in mainstream settings.
- The access of pupils with specific learning disabilities (SLD) to a range of purposeful learning experiences is effective. Using language as a cornerstone of the provision, most pupils are progressing appropriately. Even greater levels of independence can be now be promoted for many of these pupils.
- Support for pupils with severe emotional behaviour disorder (SEBD) requires development. The classroom environment was organised and interactions were respectful during the evaluation. Curriculum provision should be differentiated and IEPs should include specific educational and behavioural targets. School management and leadership should ensure that staff working in the unit are better supported and equipped to manage the needs of pupils with severe EBD.
- Support for pupils' well-being is a significant strength in this school. A broad variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided by many staff members. The provision of a school meals' programme for all pupils is praiseworthy. The school benefits from the support of the School Completion Programme. The home-school-community liaison teacher works effectively with parents to improve attendance and provides support at the time of school transfers. Positive parental involvement in education is promoted through a wide range of adult classes. The role of parents in supporting learning in the classroom should be encouraged.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management accepts the main findings of the report, namely that school management is efficient, strongly focused on pupils' pastoral development and an atmosphere of mutual respect is evident across the school. The report affirms the positive school atmosphere and the high quality of support for all pupils' wellbeing. It also acknowledges the ongoing support for our school from the board of management and the parents' association who provide valuable support to the school.

Part B: 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, principal and in-school management will engage in a more focused monitoring of literacy and numeracy targets to improve learning outcomes. The improvement of literacy standards will become our main focus. We will implement a whole-school integrated approach to language and literacy teaching in English and Irish. We will review our planning and assessment processes to guide school improvement. We will use available assessment data to better plan our literacy and numeracy. We will avail of the expertise of the SESS for support and planning for our special classes.