

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Attracta's Senior NS
Meadowbrook, Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla: 19716B

Date of inspection: 05 February 2015



1. Introduction

St Attracta's Senior NS is a co-educational primary school serving the parish of Meadowbrook, and neighbouring communities and it caters for pupils from third to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Pupils of a number of denominations also attend the school and are made very welcome through the school's promotion of a culture of community and inclusiveness. The inclusive school environment and the positive interactions in evidence between the staff, pupils and parents are commendable. There are 332 pupils enrolled in the school and overall attendance levels are very good. 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.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and four support teaching settings.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The commitment demonstrated by the board of management to the continuing development of the school is highly praised.
- The principal provides outstanding leadership in the work of the school and in its effective organisation and management.
- The principal is skilfully supported by a highly committed deputy principal and in-school management team who conscientiously attend to a wide range of duties.
- A culture of teamwork and collaboration is cultivated successfully among the staff who demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's priorities.
- The overall quality of teaching across the school is commendable. Teachers promote high levels of interest, effort and involvement of the pupils in lessons.
- A very good range of resources for teaching and learning is provided and purposefully used by teachers.
- The care and management of the pupils is excellent. The pupils are motivated and enthusiastic learners and the overall standard of their achievement and behaviour is praiseworthy.
- Parents give valuable support to the work and development of the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- To extend and enrich the pupils' learning experiences in Mathematics, wider opportunities should be provided for pupils to engage in discovery learning, involving in-depth exploration and discussion of mathematical concepts and relationships.
- The school's individual education planning process would benefit from further refinement in relation to the writing of specific learning targets that can facilitate the tracking of pupil progress.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted, meets regularly and its members attend diligently to a range of duties concerned with the good management and development of the school. Matters of finance, school organisation, staffing and policy development are discussed regularly. School policies are carefully considered and ratified by the board. Over the years, numerous successful fundraising events have been organised in collaboration with the parents' association. The commitment demonstrated by the board to the continuing development of the school is highly praised.
- The principal provides outstanding leadership in the work of the school and in its effective organisation and management. A positive school climate and collaborative working relationships are in evidence throughout the school. A culture of distributive leadership is promoted across all areas of the life of the school. The principal is skilfully supported by a highly committed deputy principal and in-school management team (ISM) who conscientiously attend to a wide range of duties. The ISM team meets regularly, reviews duties according to school priorities and collaborates effectively with staff colleagues. The ISM team also provides regular reports to the board on the work it has undertaken during the school year and this practice is commended. The shared and inclusive leadership of the school contributes significantly to the high quality of education provided in St. Attracta's Senior NS. The willingness of the staff team to take on additional tasks where necessary is acknowledged. Very effective school administration and secretarial support are also in evidence. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents indicated that they are happy with the school and that it is well run.
- The care and management of the pupils is excellent. The pupils are motivated and enthusiastic learners and the overall standard of their achievement and behaviour is praiseworthy. An environment of mutual respect is cultivated successfully and pupils' responsibility towards others is beneficially promoted. A positive code of behaviour has been developed and this is reflected in the management of the pupils in classrooms.
- Relationships with the school community are very good. The parents of the pupils give valuable support to the work and development of the school and the contribution of the parents' association over many years is praiseworthy. Regular communication through newsletters, parent meetings and annual reports support these positive relationships. The questionnaire responses indicate that parents feel welcome in the school.
- The school accommodation, ancillary and playground areas are maintained to a high standard. The staff involved are commended for the praiseworthy classroom environments and curricular displays throughout the school. The school is well resourced and a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) has been developed across the school. While good practice is in evidence in the use of ICT as a teaching resource, where practicable, consideration could be given to providing pupils with a wider range of opportunities to use ICT in the classroom setting.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The collaborative approach to curriculum planning and the overall quality of whole-school planning is praiseworthy. A conscientiously developed and comprehensive whole-school plan incorporates relevant curriculum, organisational and pastoral policies. Whole-school planning gives good guidance to teachers in formulating classroom planning and on the operation of the school. The teachers meet regularly to reflect on their work, classroom practice and school policies. Good use is made of assessment data at classroom and whole-school level. The teachers have engaged productively in school self-evaluation

(SSE) processes and school improvement plans have been devised for the areas of literacy and numeracy.

- 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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning across the school is commendable. The teachers provide lessons which are well structured, interesting and promote good engagement of the pupils. Very good use of high quality classroom resources, including the use of the interactive whiteboard, was in evidence. In the questionnaires, the majority of pupils responded that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Teachers employ a good range of assessment approaches to assess pupil progress. Assessment-for-learning approaches are widely used in classrooms across the school and pupil self-assessment folders have recently been introduced.
- Tá teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán árd sa scoil seo. Déanann na múinteoirí sár-iarracht dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a chothú agus na daltaí a mhealladh chun Gaeilge a labhairt go neamhfhoirmiúil i rith an lae. Baintear úsáid as raon leathan de mhodhanna múinte. Úsáidtear cluichí, drámaíocht, pictiúir, cartáí agus teicneolaíocht go héifeachtach sna rangsheomraí. Múintear foclóir nua agus frásaí nua go coinsiasach agus tá an chuid is mó de na daltaí i ngach rang ábalta ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Baineann na daltaí taitneamh as na ceachtanna Gaeilge agus tá ag eirí go maith leo i labhairt na Gaeilge. Is féidir leis an chuid is mó de na daltaí léamh le muinín agus le tuiscint. Tá samplaí deasa d'obair scríofa na ndaltaí ar thaispeáint.

There is a high standard of teaching and learning of Irish in this school. The teachers make very good efforts to promote a positive attitude to Irish and to encourage the pupils to speak Irish informally throughout the day. A wide range of teaching methodologies is used. Games, drama, pictures, cards and technology are used effectively in classrooms. New vocabulary and phrases are taught conscientiously and most pupils in all classes can ask and answer questions. The pupils enjoy their Irish lessons and are progressing well in spoken Irish. Most pupils read with confidence and understanding. There are good examples of pupils' written work displayed.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Effective teaching of oral language is in evidence across the curriculum as pupils are encouraged to engage with a broad variety of topics in class discussion. The use of structured programmes, graded reading schemes, class novels, guided reading initiatives, and the encouragement of pupils' personal reading serve to ensure very good levels of reading competence and to successfully foster positive attitudes to reading among pupils. A whole-school approach to the teaching of comprehension strategies is in evidence. Pupils are developing work of good quality in writing for a variety of purposes and audiences across an appropriate range of genres. Most pupils report that they are doing well at reading.
- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high quality in the school. Features of effective practice include clear explanation of concepts, focussed questioning and good use of technology by teachers. Relevant and useful SSE of numeracy has been undertaken and detailed analysis of standardised test results across the strands has been carried out. The pupils are motivated and display high levels of interest in lessons and very good overall standards of achievement in Mathematics are in evidence. To further extend and enrich the pupils' learning experiences in Mathematics wider

opportunities should be provided for pupils to engage in discovery learning, involving in-depth exploration and discussion of mathematical concepts and relationships.

- High quality teaching and learning in Science is in evidence. A broad and interesting programme is implemented. Lessons are well structured, concepts are explained clearly and teachers direct the learning activities carefully. The pupils demonstrated keen enthusiasm for Science and engaged very well in lessons. They were afforded good opportunities to develop the skills of observation, prediction and recording in the lessons observed. Consideration should be given to providing further opportunities for pupils to explore scientific concepts through investigations and experiments, working independently of the teacher.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils in St. Attracta's Senior NS is very good. The principal and staff are committed to the welfare and care of all pupils, the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum and the continued improvement of their learning. The school's support for learning is carefully and conscientiously organised and the members of the highly committed support team work collaboratively in addressing the needs of pupils. A good variety of methodologies is employed to address a wide spectrum of needs and pupils engage purposefully in support settings. Effective practice in promoting pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy was observed in support and classroom settings. Opportunities are provided for pupils to access support, both in-class and in individual and small group settings. The special needs assistant team makes a valuable contribution in supporting pupils with special needs throughout the school day. High quality whole-school and teacher planning is in evidence. While teachers prepare detailed individual education plans (IEPs) and use these to inform the programmes undertaken, the school's IEP process could benefit from further refinement in relation to the writing of specific learning targets that can facilitate closer monitoring of individual pupils' progress in specific areas of concern. The school is to be commended for the implementation of initiatives, such as the Rainbows programme, to address pupils' pastoral care needs.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

On behalf of the school community of St. Attracta's Senior National School, the Board of Management welcomes the report, highlighting as it does the excellent standards of teaching, learning, leadership and management in St. Attracta's. The board notes with pride the inspectorate's findings in relation to excellent care and management of pupils, and the acknowledgement of their commendable standard of achievement and behaviour. The Board also appreciates the acknowledgement of the culture of teamwork and collaboration of staff and the very good relationships with the school community.

The Board of Management wishes to thank all of the partners involved in making St. Attracta's a caring, happy and high quality learning environment. The Board recognises and appreciates the ongoing dedication of the staff and their commitment to the pupils and the valuable support of the parents in the work and development of the school.

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 school has reviewed the opportunities provided for pupils to engage in extended and enriched learning experiences in Mathematics and this is reflected in school planning and in individual plans.
- The education resource team will be further refining the individual education planning process and intends that the tracking of pupil progress will be further facilitated through more specific learning targets.