

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Dunboyne Junior National School,
Dunboyne, Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla: 20032B

Date of inspection: 14 January 2015



1. Introduction

Dunboyne JNS is a co-educational junior school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Meath. It shares a campus with its senior school. At the time of the evaluation there were 562 pupils enrolled. School attendance levels are very good. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in twelve mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The principal provides outstanding leadership which is learning-focused, child-centred and professionally enabling.
- The work of the board of management and the parents' association is highly commendable.
- The standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Mathematics and History is very high.
- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs, including pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), is very good.
- There is very effective practice underway in school planning, school self-evaluation (SSE) and assessment which is having a very positive impact on the quality of the pupils' learning.
- The in-school management team carries out its work effectively and successfully leads and coordinates actions for school improvement.
- The staff are commended for the skilful and supportive manner in which the pupils are managed: the pupils are exemplary in their behaviour, their attitudes and their disposition to learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- I múineadh na Gaeilge, ba chóir tuilleadh deiseanna a sholáthar do na daltaí na heiseamláirí nuafhoghlamtha a úsáid i bpéirí agus i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla chun máistreacht a fháil orthu.
- *In the teaching of Irish, the pupils should be provided with extended opportunities to use the newly-learned language exemplars in pairs and in varied contexts in order to gain mastery of them.*
- To build on the good work underway in differentiation, it is advised that teachers differentiate their learning objectives and activities in lessons to a greater extent in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for the more able pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is highly commendable. Board members ensure that the school optimises the learning experiences and achievements of all pupils. Their responsibilities encompass policy development, strategic planning, school maintenance, support and professional development of staff, and provision of resources.
- The principal provides outstanding leadership. Her instructional style is informed by her deep knowledge of pedagogy, her empowerment of staff and her commitment to developing the school as a centre of excellence whereby each child achieves success. She strategically leads the school in a visionary and innovative manner, and fosters excellent relations with parents, staff members and the community. Members of the in-school management team, in close partnership with the principal, lead improvements in learning and carry out a wide range of duties to a very high standard.
- The management of resources is very good. The school has developed a number of additional resources to support the pupils' learning. These include a library, museum, computer room, internal play area, garden, sensory room and a unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). All teachers use a wide range of high-quality teaching resources, including technology, and they prepare stimulating classroom environments. School personnel are very well managed. Mentoring, induction and continuous professional development practices are well established. All ancillary staff members, including the special needs assistants, carry out their duties in an effective and supportive manner.
- There are very good relations and communications with the community. This inclusive school is committed to strengthening its links with local schools, the community and parents. The setting up of a Community Learning Group by the school is an innovative development in this regard. Very effective communication strategies are in place to inform and support parents regarding their children's education. A dynamic parents' association, shared between the two schools, provides commendable support to the school. In the Inspectorate survey conducted during the evaluation, almost all parents agreed that they are happy with the school, and that it is welcoming and well run.
- The management of pupils is a significant strength of the school. The staff are commended for the skilful and supportive manner in which the pupils are managed. The pupils are exemplary in their behaviour, their attitudes and their disposition to learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning process is very good. This collaborative, consultative and cyclical process, led by the principal, and coordinated by post-holders, is centred on school improvement. Detailed, organisational policies assist the smooth and effective running of the school. The comprehensive whole-school curriculum plans are reflective of the school context and give clear guidance to teachers on all aspects of curricular provision.
- The school engages in effective strategic planning and school self-evaluation (SSE). The school improvement plan (SIP) for oral language reflects the school's confident engagement with evidence gathering, data analysis, target setting, programme

implementation and review. The principal, with the active support of the board, enables all staff to engage in the process of school improvement through professional development, collaboration and the sharing of expertise.

- Teachers prepare detailed, objectives-based planning which is informed by the school plan and SSE. They compile detailed and reflective monthly records of general learning.
- 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 quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commendable. Teaching is characterised by well-structured lessons, vibrant delivery and stimulating learning tasks. The use of play-based approaches to learning in the infant classes is praiseworthy. The pupils' levels of engagement and their cooperative skills are impressive. The quality of their written work, in terms of presentation and penmanship, is very good.
- Careful consideration is given by teachers to ensuring that pupils' diverse learning needs are met. A cohort of pupils with high ability receive additional support through their participation in a school-based extended-learning programme. To build on this, it is recommended that teachers differentiate their learning objectives and activities in lessons to a greater extent in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for the more able pupils.
- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán cuí sa Ghaeilge cé go bhfuil gnéithe le forbairt. Múintear formhór na gceachtanna trí Ghaeilge, agus baintear dea-úsáid as fearais, cluichí, amhráin agus rainn chun tacú leis an bhfoghlaim. Múintear foclóir nua sna ceachtanna ach téann sé dian ar na daltaí an teanga a úsáid agus ceisteanna a chur. Ba chóir go mbunófaí na heiseamláirí nua ar ghnáthsaol na ndaltaí agus achar níos faide a chaitheamh ar mhúineadh agus ar ath-mhúineadh na n-eiseamláirí go córasach. Moltar tuilleadh deiseanna a sholáthar do na daltaí an teanga nua a úsáid i bpéirí agus i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla chun máistreacht a fháil uirthi.
- *Overall, the standard of Irish is appropriate, although there are aspects for development. The majority of lessons are taught through Irish and good use is made of resources, games, songs and rhymes to support learning. New vocabulary is taught during lessons, however pupils experience some difficulty using the language and posing questions. It is recommended that the new exemplars be based on the pupils' everyday lives and that more time be spent on the direct teaching and revising of these exemplars in a systematic way. It is advised that the pupils be provided with extended opportunities to use the new language in pairs and in different contexts in order to gain mastery of it.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. The standard of reading is highly commendable. This is achieved through ongoing assessment, teaching of early-reading skills, intervention programmes, the use of graded-reading materials and the provision of varied reading opportunities. The pupils are confident communicators and they demonstrate good oral language skills. In order to maximise the effectiveness of the SIP for oral language, it is advised that teachers clearly set out the intended language-learning objectives of their lessons in their planning. The pupils are provided with regular opportunities to write, and many fine examples were noted during the evaluation. In some classes, there is scope to extend the purposes for

which the pupils write. To this end, consideration should be given to providing pupils with the opportunity to engage with writing in specific genres in a sustained manner.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The observed lessons comprised interactive oral work, varied methodologies, good teacher-modelling and the use of practical resources. Teachers related mathematics to the pupils' everyday lives. There is effective intervention underway through the team teaching of a programme of number instruction. At all times the pupils were highly engaged and were provided with opportunities to work cooperatively and to compute with a purpose. Given the very high standards achieved by many pupils, there is scope to enhance the level of challenge provided for the more able pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is very good. Teachers implement a comprehensive, balanced programme with an emphasis on change and continuity, chronology, personal history and local studies. They capably develop the pupils' emerging skills as historians, for example through project work, interviews and show-and-tell activities. The effective use of evidence, timelines and artefacts was evident during the evaluation, and pupils displayed very good learning overall. There were many appropriate examples of their work on display, including timelines, personal histories and sequencing activities.
- Very effective assessment practices are used at whole-school and at individual level to identify the pupils' learning needs, to track progress, to inform interventions and support, and to evaluate the impact of these on pupils' learning. The emphasis on promoting self-assessment by pupils is praiseworthy. Where assessment records were most effective, they were aligned to curriculum objectives and were used to inform planning. The pupils' work is consistently corrected and the teachers provide positive and constructive feedback for improvement.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school's highly-skilled, dedicated team ensures that the varied models and interventions provided are carefully planned, very well coordinated and tailored to pupils' needs. These supports encompass learning support, resource teaching, English as an additional language (EAL) teaching and a dedicated ASD unit. Comprehensive plans at all stages of the continuum of support are compiled in a consultative, collaborative manner, and they comprise relevant, time-bound targets. Support, both withdrawal and in-class, was characterised by high expectations, dynamic teaching and meaningful learning experiences.
- This inclusive school ensures that all pupils can fully participate in school life. A range of additional supports, programmes and activities is provided including a book-rental scheme, school-transfer programme, Green-School actions and theme-based weeks, for example, Science Week. There is commendable provision for the promotion and celebration of diversity and interculturalism.

Published May 2015

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 welcomes the very positive tone of this report and the affirmation of the great work being carried out in the school by the staff, pupils and parents. This work is supported by the Board and the Parents' Association. It also welcomes the very positive feedback from the parents during the course of the evaluation.

The Board is pleased that the report identifies and acknowledges the very high standards of learning, teaching, and pupil achievement which is clearly evident in the school. It also welcomes the recognition of the inclusive and positive learning atmosphere of the school and the exemplary behaviour and attitude to learning of the pupils.

The Board of Management believes that the positive findings recognise the dedication, competency and professionalism of the entire staff 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 Board of Management acknowledges the recommendations of the inspectors. The school appreciates the opportunity to use the recommendations in its self-evaluation and self-improvement processes. As a first step we are working on the development of the skills of the more able pupils in the area of numeracy, and this is included in our Numeracy Self Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2015-2018.