

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Monkstown Educate Together National School
Kill Avenue
Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 20060G**

Date of inspection: 3 December 2013



1. Introduction

Monkstown Educate Together National School is a multidenominational school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It operates under the patronage of the Dalkey School Project. At the time of the evaluation 379 pupils were enrolled. Overall attendance levels are very good with a small number of pupils absent for more than 20 days. Strategies are in place to promote attendance.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and three 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 school is praised for its welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and its commitment to the holistic development of pupils.
- There is commendable support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- The school is led by a highly dedicated principal and in-school management team.
- Teachers use a range of teaching methodologies effectively and present lively, engaging and well-structured lessons.
- The management of pupils is very good. Pupils present as confident, enthusiastic and well-motivated learners.
- The school has a wide range of resources which teachers use effectively to support teaching and learning.
- The quality of the school environment is very good. The building is maintained to a very high standard and there are commendable displays of pupils' work throughout the school.
- The work of the board of management and the parent/teacher association (PTA) in supporting the work of the school is praised.
- There is very good capacity among the school staff to secure ongoing school improvement.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The quality of the school self-evaluation undertaken to date will be further enhanced through the setting of a smaller number of more specific targets and approaches.
- A system for monitoring the implementation of the agreed approaches and the extent to which the named targets have been achieved should be put in place.
- To ensure that the competence and confidence of all pupils in Mathematics is

successfully promoted, the banded approach to the teaching of Mathematics should be reviewed and monitored carefully.

3. Quality of School Management

- Commendable support is given by the board to the school. Duties are carried out enthusiastically, efficiently and competently. The board is actively involved in policy development. In the questionnaires almost all parents responded that they are kept informed of the work of the board.
- The school is led by a highly dedicated principal and in-school management team. The principal successfully promotes a culture of inclusiveness and collaboration among all members of the school community. In the parent questionnaires almost all reported that they thought the school was well run. The in-school management team work diligently and carry out a wide range of duties in the school. The willingness of other staff members to take on additional duties as required is praised. The challenge for in-school management is to continue to drive the school improvement agenda through ongoing engagement in school self-evaluation (SSE).
- The school is commended for the positive, supportive and inclusive school environment. The building is maintained to a very high standard. There are commendable displays of pupils' work throughout the school. There is very effective management and use of resources by teachers to support learning. There are very good levels of engagement by staff in continuous professional development. The support provided by the ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth operation of the school.
- The school operates an open-door policy to parents. Almost all parents responded that the school is welcoming of them. The school uses a variety of methods to communicate with the school community. Formal parent teacher meetings are held once a year, reports are sent home annually and parents are welcome to meet with teachers if they have a concern. The school also hosts information meetings for parents of each class grouping at the start of the school year. While very good efforts are made to ensure that all policies and procedures are communicated to all, further thought should be given to informing parents regarding the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and the school's policy on bullying.
- The school has a highly committed parent/teacher association (PTA) that enhances the quality of pupils' experiences in school. Parents are actively involved in a wide range of school-related activities including shared reading, social events and various fundraising activities. The PTA is praised for its organisation of an extensive after-school activities programme.
- The management of pupils is very good. A positive code of behaviour is in place which is reflected in the management of the pupils in the classrooms. A democratic and respectful approach is used and the inclusion of the voice of pupils through the Green Schools Initiative and the school's student council is commended. Pupils present as confident, enthusiastic and motivated learners.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A praiseworthy level of planning has been undertaken and a comprehensive whole-school plan is in place including a range of organisational, administrative and curriculum

policies. All teachers engage in classroom planning and complete an agreed template. It is important that the targets identified through the school's self-evaluation process are reflected in teachers' planning and that the specific learning activities to be used to support the agreed targets are identified. There are good structures in place for planning collaboratively.

- Teachers have engaged well in school self-evaluation (SSE) and have gathered a wealth of data from a variety of sources. A wide range of areas in literacy and numeracy for future development have been identified. The quality of the SSE undertaken to date will be enhanced through the further refinement and use of this data to identify the school's main focus for improvements in literacy and numeracy and through the establishment of fewer, more-specific targets and agreed approaches. A system for monitoring the implementation of the agreed approaches and the extent to which the named targets has been achieved should be put in place.
- 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 is high. Teachers use a range of pedagogies effectively including, whole-class, collaborative group and pair work and independent work. Some very good creative methodologies were also in evidence. The overwhelming majority of the parents' questionnaires indicate that parents are satisfied with their children's learning. A range of assessment practices is in place. Teachers monitor pupil progress through the use of standardised test results, checklists, and keeping of work samples. In many cases supportive commentary is given to pupils about their work. A review of the school's assessment policy is currently underway. In reviewing its assessment policy it is important that due attention is given to the use of assessment for learning approaches. More careful analysis of the assessment data will provide guidance in keeping teaching more directly focussed on improving learning outcomes.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht na múinteoireachta go maith. Déantar sár-iarracht dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a chothú agus tá fonn ar na hoidí í a fheabhsú. Baintear úsáid éifeachtach as raon leathan de straitéisí agus achmhainní i rith na gceachtanna. Cleachtar an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil go rialta. Cé go bhfuil foclóir oiriúnach ar eolas ag na daltaí agus tá an chuid is mó díobh ábalta ceisteanna a fhreagairt bunaithe ar théamaí éagsúla b'fhiú béim níos láidre a leagadh ar fhorbairt scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí agus deiseanna sa bhreis a thabhairt dóibh an teanga a úsáid agus a chleachtadh go cumarsáideach. B'fhiú freisin comtháthú níos mó a bheith ann idir an obair ó bhéal, an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht.
- *The quality of teaching in Irish is good. Teachers make praiseworthy efforts to promote a positive attitude towards Irish and they demonstrate an interest in improving standards in Irish. Effective use is made of a wide range of strategies and resources by teachers during lessons. Reading and functional writing are practised regularly. Even though pupils demonstrate appropriate vocabulary development and most of them can answer questions based on various themes it is advised that a greater emphasis be placed on developing communicative skills with pupils being provided with additional opportunities to communicate in Irish and that oral language is linked more closely with reading and writing.*

- There is high quality teaching and learning in English. Pupils are provided with many opportunities for guided reading, shared reading and independent reading. Ample books are available and pupils are positively disposed to and enjoy reading. In the pupil questionnaires most pupils responded that they were doing well in reading. Parents are involved in literacy activities. While pupils present as confident and motivated learners it is important to ensure that they are sufficiently challenged in terms of developing oral language skills. Pupils are writing in an appropriate range of genres but as identified as part of its school self-evaluation there is scope for development with regard to the quality of writing they produce. The recently-introduced agreed approach to the teaching of spelling and an overall emphasis on the teaching of punctuation and grammar should assist the school in achieving improvements in this area.
- There were some very good practices in the teaching of Mathematics evident in the school. Of particular note were the teaching of early mathematical activities, links with real-life, clear explanations, effective questioning, and some differentiated activities. The achievement of pupils in Mathematics is in line with national norms and pupils are generally motivated and positively disposed to Mathematics. Commendable efforts have been made to raise the profile of Mathematics in the school environment and the Maths Week initiative is lauded. The school has recently introduced a banded approach to the teaching of Mathematics in some classes. To ensure that the competence and confidence of all pupils in Mathematics is successfully promoted this approach should be reviewed and monitored carefully. Teachers should ensure that a mental Maths and problem-solving component is included in all lessons. Specific assessment of the concepts as they are taught and the use of the outcomes of this assessment to inform differentiation would be beneficial.
- There is commendable teaching of Drama in the school. Teachers demonstrate high levels of understanding of the different elements of Drama and all elements are included in the programme. Participation in Drama adds to pupils' levels of confidence and their levels of engagement in lessons is very good. They are well able to co-operate with others 'in role' and 'out of role' in shaping the Drama. The emphasis on the use of socio-dramatic play in the infant classes is praised. Drama is effectively linked with other curriculum areas.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- This is a welcoming and inclusive school which supports the holistic development of pupils. The school has risen admirably to the challenge of meeting a wide range of complex needs. A variety of approaches is used including withdrawal of groups and individuals, early intervention and in-class support. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and group learning programmes are of very good quality Targets are SMART and are reviewed regularly. Lessons are very well structured and tailored to the pupils' needs. A highly collaborative approach with very effective liaison and planning with class teachers, parents, special needs assistants and other agencies maximises the use of resources and their impact. It is important that the special needs team continues to develop team-teaching in the school and to ensure that the in-class support is in line with the school's identified priorities.

Published April 2014

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 and principal of Monkstown Educate Together NS welcome the very positive and affirming findings of the WSE report. In particular, the Board of Management welcomes the inspectorate's appreciation of the welcoming atmosphere, inclusivity, energy and vibrancy of the school. We are delighted that the report recognises the dedication and hard work of the principal, teaching staff, ancillary staff and parents, which makes the school a happy learning environment.

The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the challenges that face the in-school management team given the much reduced number of management positions, and to thank the staff at METNS for their commitment. We appreciate the professionalism and child-centred approach of the inspectorate during their visit to Monkstown ETNS.

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 staff will undertake to set smaller and more specific targets in our school self-evaluation at the end of year review. A system for monitoring the implementation of agreed approaches and the achievement of targets will be put in place.

The banded approach to the teaching of Mathematics will be reviewed annually.

The RSE policy is currently being reviewed; the strategies and programme content will be communicated to parents in a variety of ways including information meetings, website, class/parent home sheets, email, and parent talks where relevant.