

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Rush and Lusk Educate Together NS
Lusk, Co. Dublin
Roll number: 20176C

Date of inspection: 08 March 2013



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Rush and Lusk Educate Together NS is a co-educational primary school serving primarily the town of Lusk and also the town of Rush in north County Dublin. The school is under the patronage of Educate Together and there are currently 276 pupils enrolled. There is scope for pupil attendance levels to improve and the board of management is urged to ensure that the implementation of its attendance strategy is effective. During this whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education was evaluated. 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:

- There is an affirming and dynamic learning environment in this school to which all members of the school community are committed.
- The school principal adapts a calm, considered and insightful approach to school leadership which is centred effectively on the promotion of pupil learning.
- The in-school management team adopts a very successful approach to the development of teaching and learning in their curricular areas of responsibility particularly in terms of researching new ideas, identifying school needs and overseeing and encouraging the implementation of change among teachers.
- Supported by effective curriculum leadership, teachers have succeeded in developing the quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics.
- The majority of lessons observed during the evaluation were interesting, purposeful and taught effectively, resulting in very good quality learning for pupils.
- The quality of pupils' behaviour is very good and a mutually respectful relationship has been created between pupils and teachers and among the pupils themselves.
- The quality of support for pupils is very good. The identification of pupils' needs and the monitoring of their progress are particularly effective.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar níos mó leanúnachais a chothú sa Ghaeilge labhartha agus scríofa, ó rang leibhéal go rang leibhéal, ar bhonn laethúil. *It is recommended that greater continuity is fostered in the daily use of spoken and written Irish from class level to class level.*
- Some teachers' short-term planning in Mathematics should provide greater detail with regard to how the range of pupil ability levels will be addressed. This is particularly necessary with regard to the learning objectives and anticipated learning outcomes for more able pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted correctly and undertakes its work efficiently and effectively according to required procedures and protocols. It is particularly commendable that the board is aware of current priorities for the development of teaching and learning within the school and is aware of its role in supporting these priorities.
- The school principal adapts a calm, considered and insightful approach to school leadership which is centred effectively on the promotion of pupil learning. This has been integral to the creation of the good quality learning environment that exists within the school. The in-school management team adopts a very successful approach to the development of teaching and learning in their curricular areas of responsibility, particularly in terms of identifying school needs, researching new ideas and overseeing and encouraging the implementation of change among teachers. This has created a very effective model of development planning which is readily applicable to all curriculum areas.
- The school makes efficient and effective use of its building, facilities and resources to provide the pupils with a stimulating and well-maintained learning environment. There are plans in place for the further development of the school.
- A positive and mutually-respectful relationship exists between teachers and pupils.
- In a meeting with the inspector conducted as part of the whole-school evaluation, members of the parent and teacher association expressed their satisfaction with the quality of education being provided to their children and the opportunities afforded to them to be informed of their child's learning and to discuss their child's progress. However, a concern was expressed that lessons in Mathematics could be more challenging for more able pupils at the infant and junior class levels of the school. A questionnaire completed by parents as part of the whole-school evaluation process indicates strong levels of satisfaction with the quality of education being provided in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Organisational policies are written clearly and are effective in relating to the context of the school. Curriculum plans rightly focus on what is particular to the implementation of the curriculum area within Rush and Lusk Educate Together NS. The school has adopted a very effective action-planning approach to the development of teaching and learning within the school. This has included a process of systematic self-evaluation and consultation among the school community and has impacted positively on classroom practice.
- Overall, the quality of teachers' short-term planning is of very good quality although there is scope for this to be better in some few instances. A very worthwhile template is in use within the school, emphasising the central importance of clear learning objectives to effective teacher planning. Long-term planning is appropriately focused and effectively delineated into time-bound units. An effective format is adopted for monthly progress records.
- 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 go maith sa Ghaeilge. Sna ceachtanna a breathnaíodh le linn na cigireachta bhí cuspóirí agus structúr cinnte agus oiriúnach ag baint leo. Tá scileanna éisteachta agus tuisceana na n-daltaí forbartha go breá agus baintear úsáid mhaith as modhanna spreagúla, obair i bpéirí agus modh na drámaíochta, mar shampla, chun an foclóir a fhorbairt agus deiseanna cumarsáide a chruthú. B'fhiú leabhair mhóra scéalaíochta a chur ar fáil sna seomraí ranga chun suim na ndaltaí a spreagadh a thuilleadh. O rang léibhéal go rang léibhéal, feictear forbairt bhreá ar fhoclóir na ndaltaí agus ar a gcumas abairtí a struchturú i gceart, ach go háirithe maidir le úsáid na mbriathra, na réamhfhocal agus na bhforainmneacha. Chun tabhairt faoi na deachleachtais seo a fhorbairt, moltar níos mó leanúnachais a chothú sa Ghaeilge labhartha agus scríofa ar bhonn laethúil. Léann cuid mhaith de na daltaí go cruinn le foghraíocht cheart and tuisceant mhaith. Sna meánranganna, níl go leor le léamh ann sna téacsleabhair atá roghnaithe ag an scoil agus moltar leabhar eile a úsáid chun léitheoireacht sa bhreis a chur ar fáil. Chomh maith le seo, léiríodh le linn na meastóireachta go bhfuil an téacsleabhar ro-dheacair do roinnt daltaí agus is gá don scoil polasaí a chruthú faoi seo. B'fhiú an Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Chonrach a úsáid chun breis eolais a thabhairt do na h-oidí ar dhul chun cinn na ndaltaí sa léitheoireacht agus seicliostaí a choimead ar cad atá ar eolas ag na daltaí. *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Lessons observed during the inspection had clear and appropriate objectives and structure. Pupils' listening skills and understanding are developed well and good use is made of stimulating approaches such as pair work and Drama as a means of developing vocabulary and providing pupils with an opportunity to communicate. It would be worth making more large format storybooks available in classrooms to stimulate pupils' interest further. From class level to class level, there is evidence of a good development in pupils' vocabulary and their ability to structure sentences correctly particularly in terms of the use of verbs, prepositions and pronouns. To advance this good practice further, it is recommended that greater continuity in the daily use of Irish, in spoken and in written Irish, be fostered. A good number of pupils read with correct pronunciation and good understanding. In the middle classes, the textbook in use does not provide sufficient reading text and it is suggested that a different textbook be used and additional reading be provided. Furthermore, the textbook is too difficult for some pupils and the school needs to put a policy in place for these instances. It would be worthwhile making use of the Drumondra Irish Test for the additional information it would provide teachers with regard to pupils' progress in reading, and making use of checklists to record pupils' knowledge.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Pupils demonstrate fluency and confidence in their oral language. The quality of pupils' attainment levels in reading is good. In the infant and junior classes, there is scope to enrich the present approach to the development of phonological awareness skills. Hearing pupils read aloud at every class level is an important element of checking their understanding of what they read and is an activity that should be further emphasised. There is evidence of good progress in pupils' writing skills as they proceed through the school. The use of the writing indicators from the Drumcondra English profiles will enhance the teaching of independent writing through emphasising more focused skill development and providing pupils with a means of self-assessing their own progress in writing. In some classes, there is a need to improve the standard of presentation of some pupils' written work with attention both to letter formation and lay-out.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Provision is made to implement the curriculum in a manner that is both systematic and comprehensive. The principles of effective mathematics education are in evidence such as the use of concrete materials, the application of mathematical concepts to real-life situations and the focused development of problem-solving skills. In all lessons observed

during the evaluation, the quality of teaching ranged between good and very good with an appropriate emphasis placed on developing both the understanding of concepts and operations and their application. There were also some very commendable examples of teachers making the learning within lessons explicit to pupils and situating this learning in the context of pupils' previous learning. This practice is effective in heightening the pupils' concept of mathematics lessons as not being made up of stand-alone activities but part of a learning continuum. While there are some commendable examples of very good provision for more able pupils in Mathematics, this type of provision should characterise all mathematics lessons. Overall, pupil attainment levels are good with scope for some more able pupils in some classes to be challenged further.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very good. A variety of resources and teaching approaches are used to provide pupils with a broad range of interesting learning experiences across the SPHE curriculum. During the evaluation, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of a range of topics from the curriculum together with a good ability to apply this knowledge to their own lives. For the most part, pupils listened well to their peers during class discussion. This is an essential skill to promote among all pupils if pupils are to feel encouraged to participate thoughtfully in discussion and feel their contributions are valued. A student council is in place. In a meeting with the inspector as part of this whole-school evaluation, student council members demonstrated a good ability to explain their role and function, to discuss current issues of concern and to identify what they are learning through participating in the student council. In a questionnaire completed as part of the WSE, a substantial minority of parents expressed a lack of familiarity with the school policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). The school should endeavour to address this.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement ranges between good and very good. Lessons are purposeful, interesting and well structured. Teacher questioning of pupils is particularly effective. There is a richness to the range of learning experiences and activities which the school provides for pupils and this is to be commended. There are some very good examples of annotated, criteria-based checklists being maintained by some teachers in a range of subject areas in order to provide an informative record of pupils' progress. There is scope for this good practice to be adopted on a more wide-scale basis within the school. In a questionnaire completed by pupils from third to sixth class, the majority of pupils feel they are doing well in school and making progress in their learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. There is a very strong sense of support teachers and classroom teachers working effectively in collaboration to provide appropriate interventions for pupils. Teaching is very well structured, very well informed by pupils' learning needs, and learning outcomes are very good. Special needs assistants support pupils with special educational needs very effectively. While parents are very central to the process of planning for pupils with special educational needs, it would be beneficial to have this recorded officially within the school policy.

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