An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Peter’s National School
Maynooth Road, Dunboyne, County Meath
Uimhir rolla: 20191V

Date of inspection: 31 January 2013
1. **Introduction**

St Peter’s NS is a co-educational, vertical primary school, under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Meath and Kildare. Since its foundation in 2004, the school has been accommodated in temporary accommodation, situated on a leased site. Attendance rates are very good for the majority of pupils. 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 **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The work of the board of management is very effective. The chairperson provides committed leadership and is dedicated to the development of the school.
- The principal and teachers demonstrate high levels of commitment to the school and its pupils. They collaborate effectively and regularly engage in continuing professional development.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is very good.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is of a high standard.
- The pupils are eager and motivated in their learning.
- An ethos of respect nurtures a caring, inclusive and holistic learning environment.
- Parents provide valuable support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the board reviews dismissal times of pupils in order to achieve full compliance with Department circular 11/95.
- It is recommended that practices regarding the documenting of learning objectives and the recording of monthly progress records be reviewed.
- It is recommended that a more formal approach to parental involvement in policy formulation is implemented.
- I dtéagasc na Gaeilge, moltar níos mó deiseanna cumarsáide réalacha a chruthú do na daltaí chun a scileanna labhartha a forbarth go cónasach. *In the teaching of Irish, the creation of realistic communication opportunities for the pupils to systematically develop their speaking skills is recommended.*

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is strongly committed to the development of the school. Members demonstrate a focused understanding of curricular priorities and the holistic development of the pupils. A current priority for the board is the acquisition of a suitable
site and access to funding for a permanent building. The chairperson, in particular, is to be commended for her enthusiastic leadership and support to the school since its foundation. It is recommended that the board review the inconsistency between the documented dismissal time for pupils and the actual time of departure of a significant number of pupils who avail of school transport in order to achieve full compliance with Department circular 11/95. A review of the timing of recreation periods is also recommended to ensure that pupils in the infant classes receive maximum access to prescribed tuition periods.

- The teaching principal provides very effective leadership to the school. She fosters a spirit of purposeful collaboration, and has led the development of the school since its establishment. The deputy principal and special duties teacher contribute effectively to school development. In order to build on this, a review of their assigned duties, and the strengthening of curricular responsibilities, is advised. Teachers are commended for their frequent engagement in ongoing continuing professional development.

- The school has acquired a suitable range of teaching and learning resources. Classrooms are well presented and resources are stored carefully. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of parents in responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, indicated satisfaction with school facilities, a significant minority indicated their dissatisfaction in this regard. Ancillary staff provide valuable support to the school.

- Parents’ representatives reported that very good communication structures are in place. The school has a very committed parent-teacher association. In their responses to questionnaires, the majority of parents indicated that they are happy with the work of the school and that the school is welcoming of parents. To further facilitate parental involvement, the inclusion of parents’ views during policy formulation is recommended.

- Pupil management is very good and reflects the school’s ethos of co-operation and mutual respect. In classes where questionnaires were administered, all pupils responded that they knew the school rules, and the majority of the pupils indicated that they feel safe in school. The school’s achievement of Green School status engenders in the pupils a sense of pride and achievement.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of organisational and administrative policies is good. Their effectiveness is evidenced in the smooth running of the school. A review of the code of behaviour and the school’s policy on exemptions for pupils from the study of Irish is advised.

- The process of school-self evaluation is reflected in the careful analysis of standardised assessment data resulting in the provision of good quality targeted programmes of work for pupils.

- The quality of whole-school curriculum planning is good.

- The quality of teachers’ long-term planning is very good. The quality of short-term planning varies. There is a need for learning objectives in some curriculum areas to be delineated clearly, and to be guided by the content objectives of the Primary School Curriculum (1999). Progress records are provided by the majority of teachers. A consistent whole-school approach by all teachers to the recording of progress records is recommended.

- 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 of a high standard. Pupils demonstrate positive dispositions to their learning, and, in general, commendable levels of pupil achievement are in evidence. New concepts are clearly explained, and teachers provide suitable resources during the learning activities. Good quality learning opportunities are devised for pupils. However, the provision of further opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively is recommended. The incremental development of pupils’ sustained listening skills is also recommended. A whole-school approach to penmanship and presentation should be implemented.

- Cé go gcuirtear na ceachtanna sa Ghaeilge i láthair go bríomhar, taitneamhach, d’fhéadfaí cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama a fheabhsú. Baintear úsáid as raon leathan straitéisí cuí chun chun scileanna éisteachta agus tuiscint na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Tá foibrí leathan ar eolas ag cuid mhaithe de na daltaí, agus éirionn le daltaí áirithe abairtí simplí a chumadh ar na téamaí atá ídir láimh. Bíonn deacrachtaí ag formhór na ndaltaí struchtúr ceart a chur ar saith abairtí, agus na briathra a lámhseáil le muinín, áfach. Moltar trí thréimhse cumarsáide an cheachta a cur i bhfeidhm go rialta, agus níos mó deiseanna cumarsáide réalacha a chruthú do na daltaí, chun a scileanna labhartha a fhorbairt go córasach. Léann cuid mhaithe do bhaint de ceann de 10 a scríobhnaíonn scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil a chleachtar don chuid is mó.

- While lessons in Irish are presented in a lively and enjoyable manner, there is scope for development in the quality of teaching and learning. An appropriate range of strategies is used to develop pupils’ listening and comprehension skills. Many pupils have a wide register of vocabulary, and particular pupils can compose sentences based on the themes under discussion. A significant number of pupils have difficulty composing a sequence of sentences or in using verbs with confidence, however. The implementation of the three communicative stages of the lesson, and the creation of realistic communication opportunities for the pupils to systematically develop their speaking skills, is recommended. Many read simple texts with accuracy. Functional writing is in evidence for the most part.

- Overall, teaching and learning in English is good. A majority of the pupils express their views with age-appropriate competence. They have access to a wide range of reading material, and many achieve very good standards in reading. The use of a broader range of approaches to extend pupils’ comprehension skills is advised. Pupils are provided with opportunities to write across a range of genres. More frequent opportunities for pupils in the infant and junior classes to write independently are advised. Very good use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by pupils in the senior classes is noted in regard to poetry writing and independent project work.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is commendable. There is a consistent whole-school approach to activity-based learning and to the development of pupils’ mathematical language. Many pupils demonstrate very good levels of ability, and apply mathematical skills with suitable accuracy. To consolidate pupils’ concept development and understanding, greater focus on linking various mathematics strands is advised. A whole-school approach to pupils’ problem solving skills is in evidence. A systematic approach to consistently embedding this in all classes should be developed.
• Notwithstanding the restrictions of the school’s accommodation, overall, good provision is made for the delivery of the Physical Education curriculum. Teachers demonstrate a flexible approach to maximising the use of the available facilities. Lessons are very well structured with a strong focus on extending pupils’ skills. Pupils participate enthusiastically, and demonstrate very positive attitudes to aspects of games, dance and gymnastics.

• Appropriate standardised and diagnostic assessment practices are in place. The tracking of individual pupil’s progress is highly commended. The quality of assessment strategies at individual class level is varied. The majority of teachers consistently monitor pupils’ written work, and positive comments are noted in copybooks. A systematic approach to classroom-based assessment and recording is advised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high quality. Skilled and dedicated coordination underpins this provision. Effective links between the special education teachers and the classroom teachers are in evidence. A balanced approach to in-class support and withdrawal models is utilised to meet the needs of particular pupils.

• Focused and comprehensive individual education plans have been drawn up. Very clear long and short-term targets are documented. A stronger focus on learning outcomes is advised for short-term planning, and a weekly approach is also advised. Very skilled teaching approaches and the use of a wide range of resources were noted during the evaluation. The special needs assistants work in a flexible and caring manner with individual pupils, and are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

• A book rental scheme minimises costs for parents.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board has written to Bus Eireann regarding the dismissal time of pupils in order to achieve full compliance with Department Circular 11/95 and are awaiting a response (P1 & 2)

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

St Peter’s Board of Management commends the inspector for her courtesy and thorough review of the work of the school. We are encouraged and energised by the many positive affirmations of teaching and learning made.