

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

**Adamstown Castle Educate Together NS,
Station Road, Adamstown, County Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 20268H**

Date of inspection: 14 May 2015



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

1. Introduction

Adamstown Castle Educate Together National School was established in 2007 to cater for the needs of a new community in the recently created Adamstown Strategic Development Zone. It operates under the patronage of Educate Together. The school has grown rapidly, and caters for a culturally and linguistically diverse pupil population. In addition to the mainstream classes, there is a special class for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). While attendance levels are good for many of the 368 pupils enrolled, the rate of absenteeism of a number of pupils gives cause for concern. The school should devise a range of strategies to encourage attendance as required under Section 22 of the Education Welfare Act (2000). 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 six support teaching settings.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- Through their effective leadership and collaboration, the board, the principal and the in-school management team provide focused, responsive and purposeful leadership to the school community.
- Teachers and staff actively support the development of the school.
- Supports for pupils with additional learning needs is of a very high quality.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the subjects evaluated is commendable.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and eager learners.
- Home-school links are fostered very effectively, and through its endeavours, the parents' association demonstrates a high level of commitment to the school.
- The school is highly praised for the manner in which it supports the participation and integration of a culturally and linguistically diverse pupil population.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A structured programme in Irish and English should be devised to effectively guide programme planning for pupils' language development.
- Teachers' short-term planning should make greater use of assessment data in planning programmes of work for cohorts of pupils.
- Specific language inputs and expected learning outcomes for pupils should be clearly documented in teachers' short-term planning.
- As part of the school self-evaluation process, strategies to monitor the implementation of agreed whole-school decisions should be devised.
- The development and use of pupil self-assessment strategies should be researched and consistently implemented in all settings.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management provides highly effective support to the school. Individual members are well informed, and undertake their duties in a very professional manner. Commendably, an agreed report on its activities is provided to the school community after every board meeting. While school registers are updated as required, there is a need in the majority of classrooms to ensure that roll books are carefully and accurately maintained.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership to the school, and promotes a culture of collaboration and inclusiveness across the school community. The deputy principal and in-school management team contribute to all areas of school leadership in a very competent manner. A brief summary of their achievements should be provided to the board at the end of each school year.
- The school's facilities are of a very high quality. Through their willingness to be involved in a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives, and their engagement in continuing professional development, teachers and staff are very supportive of the school's development. The ancillary staff contribute richly to the smooth operation of the school.
- Communication with the school community is managed very well. The school operates an open-door policy for parents. The school's website is frequently updated, and serves as an informative administrative tool, as well as sharing the pupils' achievements with members of the school community. A highly committed and well-organised parents' association is actively involved in supporting the work of the school. In their responses to questionnaires administered as part of the whole-school evaluation, a significant number of parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school.
- The management of pupils is commendable overall. Pupils are enthusiastic and eager learners. In a questionnaire which elicits responses across broad areas of school life, the majority of the pupils recorded positive responses to many of the questions. However, a significant minority of pupils expressed concerns with regard to some aspects of other pupils' behaviour. There is scope for the school to consider these findings further. Through their involvement in the student council, the voice of pupils is respected and valued.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is good. Particular administrative policies, however, should be reviewed to reflect the school's inclusive ethos. Clarity should also be provided with regard to aspects of the school's code of behaviour. Whole-school plans for Irish and English should provide effective guidance for teachers with regard to incremental oral language learning outcomes across the school. Strategies to monitor the implementation and impact of whole-school decisions should be developed.
- A review of the school self-evaluation process has been undertaken. The school is now refocusing its approach to ensure that the process impacts successfully on teaching and learning.
- There is evidence of a whole-school approach to teachers' planning. While some good examples of short-term planning were noted during the evaluation, teachers should document specific approaches to differentiated provision, and clearly identify incremental learning outcomes, particularly in relation to language teaching in Irish and in English. The current approach to recording monthly progress records should be reviewed with

regard to its usefulness in monitoring the implementation and impact of whole-school decisions

- 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 and learning is commendable overall. The use of explicit and effective whole-class and group-teaching methodologies was noted in the majority of settings. *Aistear*, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, is being successfully implemented in the infant classrooms. In a number of settings, there is scope to develop effective listener-speaker relationships. Further collaborative opportunities should be afforded to pupils to think and to carefully compose their answers in response to oral questioning. Copybooks are used extensively across the school. A consistent approach to penmanship and presentation is evident in the majority of settings.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cothaítear dearcadh an-dearfach i leith na teanga sa scoil. Baintear úsáid inmholta as amhráin, rainn agus dánta chun foghraíocht agus scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. D’ainneoin sin, b’fhiú tascanna éisteachta níos leithne a eagrú ar bhonn uile scoile. Cé go raibh cuspóirí agus struchtúr cinnte ag baint le formhór de na ceachtanna a breathnaíodh, sonraíodh easpa leanúnachais ar scileanna cumarsáide neamhspléach na ndaltaí ar an iomlán. Chun na scileanna seo a fhorbairt, moltar an t-ábhar foghlama a shoiléiriú a thuilleadh sa phlean scoile mar bhunús do chúrsaí pleanála agus cúrsaí meastóireachta na n-oidí. Déantar soláthar maith de mhúineadh na léitheoireachta agus na scríbhneoireachta ar an iomlán.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A very positive attitude to the language is cultivated in the school. Songs, rhymes and poetry are used in a commendable manner to develop pupils’ pronunciation and listening skills. Nevertheless, the organisation of a wider range of listening tasks on a whole-school basis would be worthwhile. While there were clear objectives and structure to most lessons observed, a lack of continuity in pupils’ independent communication skills was noted. To develop these skills, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on clarifying learning content in the school plan as a basis for teacher-planning and assessment. Good provision is made for the teaching of reading and writing overall.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Targeted literacy interventions are successfully implemented, particularly in the infant and junior classes. Many pupils in the middle and senior classes read with enthusiasm. However, for these classes, further targeted reading support for cohorts of pupils at their own instructional level is advised. Many pupils are confident and articulate communicators, and willingly discuss their learning. Notwithstanding this, a structured approach to the incremental development of pupils’ discrete oral language skills is recommended. The quality of pupils’ writing is very good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. In the majority of settings evaluated, lessons were characterised by the explicit teaching of mathematical language, skilful explanation of concepts, and practical linkage to the pupils’ environment. While some pupils demonstrate a resilient and determined approach in relation to problem-solving, the provision of more frequent guided learning experiences for pupils, combined with opportunities to develop their higher order maths skills, is advised.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very good. In the settings where teaching and learning was evaluated, some very good lessons were observed. In particular classrooms, the effective use of collaborative learning approaches was noted. More extensive use of these methodologies is advised. In their responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, an overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school supports their child's social and personal development.
- Standardised and diagnostic assessments are administered appropriately. There is scope to use the data from these assessments to inform differentiated programme planning in some contexts. Some highly effective, carefully recorded and frequently used classroom-based assessment strategies were noted in a few settings. There is scope to extend this approach. The development and use of pupil self-assessment strategies should be researched and consistently implemented across the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Supports for pupils with special educational needs, and for those who have English as an additional language, are of a very high quality. Provision, in response to need, is flexibly deployed on an individual and group basis. In the settings observed, teaching was of a very high quality and was very supportive of pupils' identified needs.
- The school implements the staged approach to the delivery of additional supports across the school. However, a systematic focus on embedding differentiated provision at classroom level is advised. Individual education plans are developed collaboratively. Pupils' priority learning needs are clearly documented, and in the majority of settings, measurable and time-bound targets are identified. This approach should be extended across all settings. A comprehensive review of pupils' progress is undertaken frequently.
- A special class provides a very appropriate learning environment for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. An effective balance between carefully-resourced collaborative work and one-to-one personalised teaching is supportive of the pupils' learning. In line with the needs of individual pupils, a commendable emphasis is placed on exploiting the potential for integration with mainstream classes.
- A book rental scheme minimises costs for parents. Through the effective collaboration of the school community, a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities supports the participation and integration of a culturally and linguistically diverse pupil population. The home-work and after-school clubs are but two of the supports noted in this regard.

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 of Adamstown Castle ETNS wishes to acknowledge the thorough and professional approach of the Department of Education and Skills inspectorate during this evaluation. It was important to the school community that the inspectorate would meet with the various stakeholders in the school – for that the Board of Management is very grateful. The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the commitment of staff and parents to the school. The Board of Management feels it is important to note the seriously depleted ISM Team and lack of home school liaison teacher in a school of this size and profile.

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

We accept the observations and recommendations made by the Inspectorate. The staff over the last eight years, has, through dialogue, striven to provide the best for the children in this school. It sees these recommendation as a guide for further improvement. We are currently analysing this report and drawing up a time line for implementation of these recommendations.