

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Lucan East Educate Together NS,
Lucan, Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 20303G**

Date of inspection: 21 February 2013



1. Introduction

Lucan East Educate Together National School was opened in 2008 and currently has an enrolment of 353 pupils. The school is under the patronage of Educate Together and there is evidence that its ethos is fostered successfully. The school is part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative (Band 2) and is using resources effectively to promote pupils' attendance. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings. 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:

- Very effective leadership is provided by the board of management, principal, deputy principal and in-school management team.
- Parental involvement is actively encouraged and the school has developed effective communication systems.
- A culture of teamwork and reflective practice exists among teachers, leading to high standards in teaching and learning.
- Pupils are highly motivated and relationships within the school are characterised by respect and courtesy.
- The quality and range of supports for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A more explicit focus on the teaching of language should become integral to all lessons. Further opportunities for pupils to use newly-acquired language should be provided.
- Assessment for learning practices should be developed across the curriculum to inform the planning and delivery of pupils' future learning needs.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is very effective. Members demonstrate a clear commitment to developing the school as part of the community and ensure decisions are made in the best interests of pupils. Communications between the board, parents and the wider community are very good. Finances are carefully managed and accounts are certified annually. The board plays a central role in policy development and review.

- The principal exhibits highly effective administrative, pastoral and instructional leadership skills. He has a clear, child-centred vision for the development of the school. He is competently assisted by the deputy principal and in-school management team. This team uses its expertise and experience to undertake a broad range of duties that reflect the priorities of the school. A particular focus is placed on curriculum leadership.
- The school has acquired a broad range of resources to support the implementation of the curriculum and these are well used by teachers. A positive spirit of teamwork and professional reflection is evident. Staff engage regularly in continuing professional development and show a willingness to support whole-school initiatives. Special needs assistants and ancillary staff play a central role in the smooth operation of the school.
- The quality of relationships and communications is very good. The parent-teacher association is very active and effective in its support of the school. In interviews and questionnaires, parents report very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the operation of the school. A broad range of strategies is used to communicate with parents about school activities and regarding their children's progress.
- The management of pupils is commendable. Pupils are well behaved and there is a positive atmosphere of mutual respect among adults and pupils. Participation in structures such as the Student Council enhance pupils' democratic and leadership skills. In questionnaires, the majority of pupils reported that they like school and that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Teachers are commended for the broad range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities provided.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole school planning is very good. A broad range of well-contextualised administrative policies inform the operation of the school. Curriculum plans for the subjects evaluated are of a very high quality and their provisions are well embedded in teachers' planning and practice. These plans will act as good exemplars as other curriculum plans are further developed.
- Self-evaluation and self-reflection are embedded in school culture and there is a focus on continuously reviewing planning and practice. The school has developed a range of effective action plans and their implementation is being systematically monitored. The school is praised for following the processes and procedures advocated in the recently published *School Self-evaluation Guidelines for Primary Schools*.
- The quality of teachers' planning is good. Whole-school approaches are recorded and learning activities are clearly outlined. It is recommended that short-term plans in all settings are consistently informed by curriculum objectives. The recording of specific detail on provision for differentiation is advised, particularly in English and Mathematics. Very good individual plans are prepared collaboratively for pupils in receipt of additional supports.
- 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 commendable, with excellent practice observed in some settings. Teachers display proficient classroom management skills and a facility with a broad range of methodologies. Lessons are well structured and learning is generally well consolidated. Provision should be developed to ensure the explicit teaching of curriculum-based language within all lessons. Further opportunities for pupils to work in small group contexts, using newly-acquired language for sustained periods of time, should be provided. Written work is regularly monitored and teachers are encouraged to maintain an emphasis on the neatness and presentation of work. Pupils' engagement in their learning is very good and many discuss aspects of their learning competently.
- Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta agus na foghlama go maith sa Ghaeilge. Baintear na torthaí foghlama is fearr amach i ranganna ina mhúintear spriocteanga nua sainiúil agus ina chuirtear béim ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach. I roinnt ranganna, moltar dul siar rialta a dhéanamh ar an teanga atá ar eolas ag daltaí agus níos mó béime a chur ar mhúineadh na mbriathra. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta á saothrú go céimniúil ach d'fhéadfaí béim sa bhreis a chur ar scileanna neamhspleách scríbhneoireachta. Déantar soláthar maith de rannta, d'fhilíocht agus d'amhránaíocht trasna na scoile.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. The best learning outcomes are attained in classes where specific new target language is taught and where an emphasis is placed on the communicative approach. In some classes, regular revision of the language pupils' know and a further emphasis on the teaching of verbs is recommended. Pupils' reading and writing skills are developed systematically but more emphasis could be placed on developing independent writing skills. Good provision is made for rhymes, poetry and singing throughout the school.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. The school is praised for the broad range of literacy initiatives it has embedded at a whole-school level. Commendable provision is made throughout the school to develop pupils' reading and comprehension skills. To build on good practice in oral language teaching, a more structured approach to the teaching of vocabulary and language structures is recommended. Pupils are given regular opportunities to write in a range of genres and good attention is placed on the writing process. A praiseworthy focus is placed on poetry throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable. A good emphasis is placed on oral mathematical activities and in many settings, the teaching of mathematical language is well addressed. The school reports that the differentiation of learning through ability grouping is proving effective and is monitoring pupils' progress on an ongoing basis. In some settings, further opportunities for guided-discovery learning and for pupils to discuss new concepts are advised. Effective whole-school approaches to problem solving are being implemented.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts is very good. Pupils' creativity in a range of media is nurtured through the use of effective stimuli. A commendable focus is placed on pupils responding to the work of artists, to their own work and to the work of peers. Teachers place a good emphasis on the elements of art but in some lessons, the language of art could be more fruitfully developed. A whole-school approach to documenting and recording pupils' progress in the Visual Arts should be considered.

- Assessment practices within the school are good. A broad range of standardised, screening and diagnostic tests are administered and good analysis is undertaken. All teachers have developed assessment records to document pupils' learning, with particularly valuable assessments in literacy and numeracy. It is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on assessment for learning across the curriculum to provide data on pupils' baseline competencies, attainment levels, learning achievements and future learning needs. Overall, progress records in support settings are of a high quality. The continuum of support is implemented effectively within the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Supports for pupils with special educational needs and who have English as an additional language are of a very high quality. The school has developed a team approach to the delivery of provision and there is very good communication and co-operation between mainstream and support teachers. Support is provided flexibly on a withdrawal, team-teaching and in-class support basis. A good emphasis is placed on early intervention strategies. Teaching observed was of a very high quality and was characterised by a lively pace and the use of a wide range of methods and resources to support pupils' identified learning needs.
- The school's inclusive ethos is evident and every effort is made to ensure that pupils participate and benefit from school-based initiatives. Activities organised under the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme broaden pupils' educational experiences and strengthen parental involvement in the school. The Care Team co-ordinates additional supports for pupils where appropriate.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

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

The Lucan East ETNS Board of Management wishes to thank the inspectors for their courtesy and professionalism in carrying out the WSE in February 2013. There was a great sense of professional dialogue evident in the entire process which would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the inspection team. Lucan East ETNS has worked to create a dynamic and vibrant school community since the school opened in 2008. We are delighted that the inspectors have validated the hard work of our entire school community in setting up a new school in very tough financial circumstances. We welcome the acknowledgement of the high standards we have achieved in a number of subject areas, particularly in Maths and English. We are thankful that our commitment to Special Needs Education and our endeavour to provide quality provision in this area has been noted by the Inspectorate.

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank the current staff of the school for all their hard work and commitment in striving to provide the best possible education for our students and ensuring high expectations at all times. We thank the parents/guardians for their steadfast support of the school and of their children's education. Our students are a pleasure to work with every day and deserve special mention as the pivotal part of our school community.

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 are grateful for the observations received from the inspection team. We are using the recommendations made to inform our work and build on the school self evaluation process which is already embedded within our school.

- The school is currently reviewing and gathering evidence on the teaching of language lessons across the school and developing the use of the AISTEAR curriculum already started in the school in the infant classes.
- The school will develop and embed assessment for learning practices across the school.