

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Holy Trinity NS,
Fethard, Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla: 20355C**

Date of inspection: 18 September 2013



1. Introduction

Holy Trinity NS was founded in September 2010 after the amalgamation of Nano Nagle GNS, founded by the Presentation sisters in 1862 and St. Patrick's BNS, founded by the Patrician brothers in 1873. Holy Trinity NS is a co-educational, mainstream school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly and with a special class located nearby in a High Support Unit (HSU). 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 Holy Trinity NS board of management has a very strong ethos of service and a principal who combines dedicated leadership with very effective management input.
- The school has a committed in-school management (ISM) team and creative teachers who have embraced the SSE process productively.
- Co-teaching, early intervention, group and pair activity are notable features of very effective classroom practice.
- In English, there is a highly commendable emphasis on implementing very effective programmes.
- In Mathematics, lessons are generated by teachers themselves rather than textbooks.
- In the learning support and resource teaching (LSRT) context, detailed learning profiles, specific learning targets and systematic recording are notable features.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should seek parental views prior to ratification of relevant policies.
- The board should monitor the implementation of agreed HSU special class mainstream integration procedures.
- The board should address the role of the third LSRT at the earliest opportunity to ensure compliance with the provisions of Circular 02/05.
- The board should develop a separate Code of Behaviour for the pupils in the HSU, taking cognisance of needs and circumstances.
- The excellent planning and assessment practices identified in the mainstream should be adopted in the HSU setting.
- A greater variety of writing genres and reading approaches as well as more extensive use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be adopted in the HSU setting.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school has a dedicated board of management with a strong ethos of service. It has managed the amalgamation process very successfully. The chairperson has a strong commitment to the school, has high regard for the staff and maintains regular contact. The board has generously facilitated procedures to allow the integration of pupils, where appropriate, from the HSU into mainstream. In order to ensure that such integration is successful and safe, it is recommended that the board monitors the implementation of those agreed procedures.
- The principal has dedicated her teaching career to this community, giving faithful service previously in both schools. Her committed leadership aided the amalgamation process considerably and she has provided noteworthy leadership in school self-evaluation (SSE) and in developing the school plan. The principal is supported by a dedicated and committed ISM team. Monthly meetings of the ISM team are convened and it is now recommended that agendas are set for these meetings and key decisions are recorded and discussed at staff meetings. ISM members should submit an annual report to the board on their duties.
- Parents are involved in many aspects of school life. The parents' association is very supportive and the parent questionnaire, issued as part of the evaluation, reveals strong support for the school. A very high number of parents are happy with the school atmosphere and an even higher proportion of parents are happy with the running of the school and the quality of teaching. However, parental awareness of policy warrants some attention and the board should develop mechanisms to capture parental views prior to discussion and ratification of policies.
- The board is commended for their recruitment of diligent and creative teachers. The school is well served by the commitment of the ancillary staff. School administration is addressed in an efficient manner by the school's secretary. The school grounds are maintained to a commendably high standard by the caretaker. Staff members regularly attend professional development courses. A three-year class rotation cycle was agreed at staff level in 2010. This policy now needs to be documented and agreed at board level. The school is well resourced in information and communication technology (ICT) and a member of the Presentation order is complimented for maintaining this resource.
- During the evaluation the pupils were well-mannered and displayed a very good work ethic. The pupils' skills in leadership are developed through their involvement in the students' council and in the Green School's committee. The results from pupil questionnaires indicate that pupils feel safe and know who to talk to if they are upset.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- All the required policies are in place and it is important that all ratified policies are signed and dated by the chairperson. The school is commended for putting in place a five-year long-term development plan and action plan. Their successful implementation was observed during the evaluation.
- There are noteworthy collaborative planning practices among teachers due to their involvement in SSE processes. Comprehensive long-term plans provide details on all the ongoing initiatives. Teachers plan conscientiously for the short-term using a useful common template. The staff should now look at a more useful template for the monthly report that would more easily feed back into long-term planning and whole school planning processes.

- Practices in school self evaluation (SSE) are well established in the school. The staff has undertaken an extensive assessment of pupil achievement in numeracy, involving a careful examination of standardised test scores and focussed interviews with pupils. A commendable report has been written and a comprehensive school-improvement plan was produced that sets out clear and measurable targets.
- 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 in this school is very good. Results from standardised testing in literacy indicate pupils are making steady progress and are making good progress in numeracy. Teachers maintain assessment folders documenting pupil achievement in a variety of curricular areas. Sharing of results leads to productive assessment of and for learning.
- Sna naíonáin agus sna bunranganna, múintear ceachtanna bríomhara. Cuirtear an teanga múinte i bhfeidhm le cluichí, le hobair bheirte agus le daltaí ag cur cheisteanna ar a chéile. Moltar go bpleanáilfí an gné seo, ceisteanna, de mhúineadh na teanga ar bhonn uile scoile agus go gcuirfí an plan i bhfeidhm go córasach. Ní mór chomh maith tuilleadh béime a chur ar dhruileanna san athrá sa mhúinteoireacht. Sna meánranganna agus sna hardranganna, múintear an teanga go gníomhach éifeachtach. Múintear ceisteanna go díreach torthúil agus cleachtaítear iad le hobair bheirte. Tá an bhéim seo le moladh. I gcás amháin, baineadh úsáid an-leathan as an nGaeilge chun ceacht chorpoideachais a múineadh. B'fhiú an nós seo a leathnú go ranganna eile. Tugtar faoin léitheoireacht go córasach. Tugtar faoin scríbhneoireacht go rialta agus b'fhiú anois saorscríbhneoireacht sa Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa scoil.
- *In infants and junior classes, lively lessons are taught. The language taught is made functional through games, pair work, morning news and through pupils questioning each other. It is recommended that this aspect of language learning, questioning, is planned on a whole school basis and such plan is implemented systematically. It is also recommended that greater emphasis is placed on repetition drills in teaching Irish. In the middle and senior classes, the language is taught actively and effectively. Questions are taught directly and productively and are practised by means of pair work. This emphasis is praiseworthy. In one context, wide use was made of Irish during the teaching of a PE lesson. It would be worthwhile extending this practice to other classes. Reading is taught systematically. Writing is practised regularly and it would now be worthwhile to advance free writing in Irish throughout the school.*
- A whole-school approach to developing literacy across the curriculum is praiseworthy practice. Oral language skills are developed successfully through discreet oral language lessons. From an early age pupils' skills in phonological awareness are carefully nurtured. Instead of class readers there is a highly commendable emphasis on programmes that encompass use of a wide range of books. These programmes enable teachers to teach creatively and effectively. Pupils have regular opportunities to write both functionally and creatively. Free writing combined with use of a range of *genres* is utilised productively and pupils' skills are developed systematically through process writing. The pupils' work is regularly monitored by teachers with accompanying positive and developmental comments and writing is celebrated with classroom displays. Staff

might usefully consider introducing *Aistear* in the junior classes and the involvement of parents in the school's station-teaching would be a welcome development.

- In Mathematics, teachers make very good use of early intervention team teaching, talk and discussion based on practical activities, mental arithmetic practice and brainstorming in pairs as well as differentiated group work. The key points to emerge from observation of Mathematics lessons are that in moving away from textbook use, teachers listened to pupils who in surveys for SSE claimed that Mathematics lessons were too associated with textbooks and teacher dominated talk. Teachers now teach according to the school plan and school SSE improvement plan. Ideas for lessons are generated by teachers themselves and not by textbooks. There is an emphasis on talk and discussion as a two way process between teachers and pupils. The teachers are to be commended for embracing the SSE process so positively and for generating such a positive attitude to Mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education (PE) is very good. Activities are well organised and assessment, involving teacher and pupil self assessment is used to very good effect. The use of Irish is a noted feature during some lessons observed. The school enjoys the services of external GAA and FAI coaches and the parents' contributions to these activities are appreciated.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Two full-time LSRT's are shared with a number of adjoining schools. The board decided to deploy a third full-time LSRT in a mainstream class for this year to compensate for the reduction in staffing due to a fall in enrolments. The board should address this issue at the earliest opportunity to ensure compliance with the provisions of Circular 02/05 and to ensure the requirements of pupils with special educational needs are addressed in a comprehensive manner. The LSRT's are commended on their professional practices. Detailed learning profiles are compiled, specific learning targets are set and pupil progress is recorded systematically. These good practices should be extended to track pupil achievement in social and emotional development. The development of learning plans (IPLP) is an inclusive process. Staff is advised to issue a copy of the IPLP to parents and to convene a meeting to involve parents and all other personnel to discuss programmes. Assessment is thorough and subsequent learning activities are varied and well organised. A variety of interventions is established that include elements of withdrawal and in-class support. Teachers are reminded that in certain circumstances withdrawal may deny the pupils access to experiences that are beneficial to their learning. The possibility of an exchange of roles between mainstream class teachers and LSRT teachers should also be considered in any team-teaching capacity. LSRT team meetings should be convened to discuss current and future initiatives and LSRT personnel in mainstream and in the HSU should be involved. The special-needs assistant is complimented on the quality of care and support afforded pupils.
- The High Support Unit, situated in a pleasant wooded area, adjacent to the school, caters for three pupils in a special class. The teacher enjoys a good rapport with the pupils. The learning environment is pleasant and is divided into zones. While there are some positive aspects to the work in the special class, a number of issues need to be addressed to ensure improvement and development. A reading zone would be beneficial to develop the pupils' interests in reading. A timetable is outlined for daily activity. However, this is standardised for all three pupils and should be expanded further to include individual schedules to promote independent learning. While the classroom contract strategy is good practice, current written planning and the maintenance of assessment records are limited. The excellent support practices identified in the mainstream setting should be adopted, as appropriate, in the HSU special class. Specific, measurable and achievable targets should be identified that include both curricular and behavioural goals. Clear

objectives should be outlined in fortnightly plans and differentiated learning activities should be identified. Pupils record their news daily. A greater exploitation of writing *genres* together with an engagement in free writing activity is recommended. This would add considerably to the development of pupils' writing skills. A greater variety in reading approaches is necessary, and again the worthy initiatives already identified in mainstream should be exploited. Pupils' access to ICT is too restrictive. This resource should be utilised to a much greater degree to support learning. The board should develop a separate Code of Behaviour for pupils in the HSU, taking cognisance of needs and circumstances and should facilitate access to professional development for staff who work with pupils in the HSU class and with pupils with low incidence SEN.

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 would like to thank the Inspectors for the fair and respectful way in which they carried out the W.S.E.

The Board would like to thank them for acknowledging the excellent work and practices going on in our school.

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 8th classroom teacher will be restored in Sept. 2014 and the LS teacher will return to her assigned duties. The admin principal has helped with L.S. this year.
- The H.S.U. (High Support Unit) caters for children who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and are in residential care. The B.O.M. has ratified a code of behaviour specific to this unit and the other concerns raised are currently being addressed.