An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Anne's National School,
Bailieborough, County Cavan
Uimhir rolla: 18059J

Date of inspection: 6 March 2014

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

St. Anne's National School, Bailieborough, County Cavan has 281 pupils enrolled and they are distributed across ten mainstream classes. The school currently has one class for pupils with mild general learning disability.The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. It has implemented a number of suitable strategies to improve the attendance of a significant cohort of pupils who present poor attendance patterns. 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:

- Teachers demonstrate commendable commitment and creativity as they work skilfully and conscientiously to provide a high-quality education for pupils.
- The board of management supports the organisation and development of the school in a very competent manner.
- The principal works earnestly and effectively to promote a positive, child-centred learning environment.
- The effective, multi-faceted approach to the development of pupils' literacy in English is highly commended.
- The pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation and positive learning outcomes in the curricular areas evaluated.
- Staff has engaged in school self-evaluation processes and demonstrate commitment to ongoing school improvement.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The current duties of the in-school management team (ISM) should be formally reviewed to ensure a closer alignment to evolving school priorities and a stronger emphasis on curricular leadership roles.
- A whole-school systematic approach should be adopted to the development and monitoring of pupils' oral language skills in English.
- The format and use of teachers' monthly progress reports should be reviewed to effectively monitor progression in pupils' learning.
- Chun tógáil ar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí, is fiú plean céimnithe uile-scoile a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm do labhairt na Gaeilge.

  An incremental whole-school plan should be delineated and implemented to further develop pupils' speaking skills in Irish.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. A clearly delineated development plan has been carefully devised and used effectively by the board to guide and review its various activities. The board is actively involved in the development of organisational and curricular policies. It is committed to the provision of a high quality, inclusive learning environment for pupils.

- The overall quality of the work of the in-school management team is good. The principal works earnestly to promote a positive, child-centred learning environment. His active hands-on approach and regular, purposeful interactions with pupils and teachers contributes to the effectiveness of his management and leadership skills. The ISM team currently comprises of a deputy principal, an assistant principal and six special duties post-holders who diligently discharge their duties. It is recommended that the current duties of the team be formally reviewed to ensure a closer alignment to evolving school priorities and a stronger emphasis on the curricular leadership roles. Formal records of ISM meetings should be maintained to document and inform the various stages of school development processes.

- The overall quality of the management of resources is good. Teachers are suitably deployed and avail of professional development opportunities. Ancillary staff contributes significantly to the strong culture of care and the smooth running of the school. A programme of work is being implemented to improve school facilities. Classrooms are well-presented with attractive curricular displays. A considerable investment in a range of reading materials has supported the successful implementation of literacy initiatives.

- The management of communications within the school community is good. Appropriate communication channels have been established to ensure parents are well-informed of school activities and their children's progress. The work underway to develop the school website should further enhance the quality of communication. Responses to the parent questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the school which was also attested to by representatives of the parent association. This association plays an active and valuable role in supporting the work of the school.

- The Discipline For Learning initiative is long established in the school and underpins the careful and consistent management of pupils' behaviour and motivation. Pupils demonstrate high levels of positivity towards learning activities which is also reflected in their responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation. Pupil involvement in the Green Schools initiative and the development of their active citizenship through the Health Promoting School programme is commended.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Overall, the quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation is good. Systematic, collaborative review of curricular and organisational whole-school policies is commended. In some instances, teachers present short term planning which is monthly rather than fortnightly as required in rule 126 of Rules for National Schools. It is recommended that the format and use of teachers' monthly progress reports be reviewed to monitor pupils' learning and curriculum implementation.

- A positive culture of professional reflection has been successfully nurtured and the school has engaged in suitable school self-evaluation practices. A school improvement plan has been devised with clearly delineated action plans to support the implementation of a literacy improvement initiative which is impacting positively on pupils' learning. There remains scope to enhance the specificity of targets within the school improvement plan to reflect the significant progress being made.

- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers demonstrate commendable commitment and work conscientiously to provide a high-quality education for pupils. Stimulating, carefully facilitated lessons are characterised by skilful teacher questioning, the competent deployment of a range of methodologies and constructive, affirming teacher-pupil feedback. The effective promotion of a suitable range of assessment for learning strategies is commended.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith, ar an iomlán. I gcuid de na ranganna múintear ábhar teanga oiriúnach agus tugtar deiseanna éagsúla do na daltaí cumarsáid a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge. Tá sé ar chumas roinnt daltaí abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Tá easpa muiníne ar dhaltaí eile, áfach, agus iad ag labhairt Gaeilge. Chun tógáil go céimniúil ar fhorbairt teanga na ndaltaí, is fiú plean céimnithe a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm don labhairt ar bhonn uile-scoile. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le cruinneas áirithe agus le tuiscint mhaith. Is inmholta mar atá úrscéil bheaga scríofa ag na múinteoirí mar ábhar léitheoireachta do na daltaí sinsearacha. Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán réasúnta maith á bhaint amach ag na daltaí san obair scríofa. Moltar measúnú a dhéanamh ar ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge ar bhonn uile-scoile.

- *The quality of teaching in learning in Irish is good, overall. In some classrooms suitable language content is taught and pupils are afforded various opportunities to communicate through Irish. Some pupils are capable of constructing simple sentences and asking and answering questions. Other pupils lack confidence when speaking in Irish, however. It would be worthwhile to devise and implement an incremental whole-school oral plan to systematically develop pupils' speaking skills. Most pupils read with a certain accuracy and good understanding. It is commendable that teachers have written simple novels for senior pupils. In general, pupils' standard in writing is reasonably good. Pupils' attainment in Irish should be assessed on a whole-school basis.*

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is high. Regular provision is made for discrete oral language lessons and pupils demonstrate commendable appreciation of a suitable range of poetry. However, it is recommended that the school adopts a whole-school systematic approach to the incremental development and monitoring of pupils' oral language skills. The effective, multi-faceted approach to the development of literacy is highly commended. A range of appropriate whole-school approaches has been adopted to foster positive attitudes towards reading. Pupils' word attack skills together with their comprehension skills have been developed to a very high standard. The successful establishment of evidence-based, differentiated team-teaching initiatives is commended. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in process writing and positive learning outcomes are in evidence. Pupils' penmanship is praiseworthy.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are well-structured and content is effectively linked to pupils' life experiences. A whole-school approach to the use of mathematical language has been successfully adopted. Suitable emphasis is placed on the development of mental arithmetic and pupils demonstrate good knowledge of basic number facts. While most pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of key mathematical concepts there remains some scope to enhance their mathematical skills through the provision of a greater range of differentiated activities for pupils of greater and lesser abilities. Their written work is carefully presented and monitored in a systematic, constructive manner.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is very good. A wide range of resources is used effectively to enable pupils develop a suitable range of concepts and skills. They demonstrate an impressive knowledge and understanding of the people and events studied. An audit of the local environment has been undertaken although there remains some scope to optimise pupils' learning outcomes in local history in some instances. Very effective integration with other curricular areas has enriched pupils' interest and learning in history.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school's commitment to the pastoral care of pupils permeates the high quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs. (SEN). A number of pupils present with complex social and emotional needs and considerable effort is given to meeting their needs with appropriate care and sensitivity. Members of the SEN team have recently engaged in training to assist them in their implementation of the school support continuum which promotes a problem-solving, holistic approach to the identification of pupils' needs and to appropriate interventions. Staff members are encouraged to embed such practices through regular, collaborative review of the impact of various interventions.

- Supplementary support is provided for pupils experiencing difficulty in literacy and numeracy and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Some support is provided by withdrawing pupils from class and some through in-class support models. A number of evidence-based, differentiated initiatives, including Literacy Lift Off, have been successfully established by the SEN team in collaboration with a number of mainstream classes. The Reading Recovery programme is implemented very effectively and has impacted positively on the development of literacy. Careful consideration must now be given to the balance and duration of the various interventions to ensure optimum continuity and benefit for pupils with special educational needs.

- A special class currently operates for three pupils with mild general learning disability. Provision for these pupils is good and suitable opportunities are provided for them to integrate with their peers. The school is currently preparing to establish a unit for pupils who are on the autistic spectrum.

- To ensure optimum cohesion and clarity regarding the various elements of provision for pupils with special educational needs within this school community it is recommended that co-ordination and responsibility roles be more clearly delineated.

- Lessons observed in all special education settings were well-structured, resourced and suitably paced. They were informed by appropriate planning documentation and, where required, individual education plans. It is evident that pupils in receipt of supplementary support are benefitting significantly from this assistance.

Published June 2014

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 welcomes the findings of the Whole School Evaluation report.

The BoM acknowledges the role of current and past pupils, parents, staff members, teachers, principals and board members in the positive findings of this report.

In particular the BoM is happy that the report acknowledges and affirms the very high quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in St. Anne's and notes the report's findings of high pupil motivation.

The BoM is heartened by the report's affirmation of the high quality of support for pupils in St. Anne's.

The BoM values the thorough, constructive and professional nature of the WSE.

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 BoM, principal and teachers acknowledge and welcome the recommendations of the WSE. These are being implemented in a planned and timely manner.