An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Mary's Boys' NS,
Ferrybank, Waterford
Uimhir rolla: 18235D

Date of inspection: 08 March 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

St. Mary's Boys' NS is a twelve-teacher, vertical primary school with a current enrolment of 216 pupils. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. Attendance levels in the school are very good and a variety of strategies is implemented successfully to promote attendance. 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 board of management works in a conscientious manner and is clearly committed to the ongoing development of the school.
- The principal and the teaching staff are commended for their commitment to the school and the welfare of the pupils.
- Very good relations exist between the school, the parents and the wider community.
- The school provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment for the pupils.
- Pupils' participation in whole-school decision making is promoted effectively through the work of the *Green Schools* committee and the School Council.
- Effective team-teaching approaches are being implemented effectively in the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- There should be further promotion of collaborative learning opportunities and of the pupils' independent learning skills.
- There is scope to develop the pupils' expressive oral language skills further, using focused language-learning activities, drawn from specific curriculum objectives.

3. Quality of School Management

- The committed board of management provides valuable support to the school with each member taking on responsibilities based on their skills. In particular, the board is commended for its role in the ongoing improvement of the school building. It also places great emphasis on maintaining the good links that exist between the board, the parents and the local community. The board remains committed to the proposed amalgamation of the school with the local girls' school.
- The in-school-management team comprises of the principal, the deputy principal and two special duties teachers. The principal attends to the management and administration of the school in a conscientious manner. He is instrumental in establishing a enabling

school climate that is characterised by positive working relationships across the school community. He is capably supported by the members of the in-school-management team who carry out their duties diligently. They engage in reviewing teaching and learning and lead the implementation of new programmes. It is now advised to consider the learning outcomes of these programmes.

- Very good relations exist between the school, the parents and the wider community. The school has a highly committed parents' association that makes a significant contribution to the learning experiences of the pupils by providing a range of resources. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents report that the school is welcoming of them.

- In 2010, there was an extension and a mechanical and electrical upgrade of the school, which improved the accommodation considerably. It now presents as a very attractive and stimulating learning environment. However, there remains among the board and parents serious concerns regarding the condition of the school playground and the difficulty of parking near the school.

- The management of pupils is very good. School management and staff communicate high expectations regarding pupil behaviour and the pupils respond positively to these expectations. The teachers are clearly committed to their general welfare and cultivate a caring and mutually-respectful atmosphere throughout the school. In the pupil questionnaires, it is interesting to note that almost all pupils said that they could talk to a teacher if they were upset about something in school. Pupils' participation in whole-school decision making is promoted effectively through the work of the *Green Schools* committee and the School Council.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Overall, the quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is good. The board is involved in the development of the school plan. In accordance with effective practice, curriculum plans and organisational policies are discussed, amended as necessary and ratified at board meetings. Parents are consulted in relation to administrative policies.

- The quality of curriculum planning is commendable as plans are clearly referenced to the context of the school and inform the planning and practice of teachers. As a means of optimising the value of this work and extending school self-evaluation, it is advised that an action-planning approach be used to assess the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and to identify and address priority areas for development.

- Teachers' individual planning is of a high quality. An agreed approach to short-term planning and the recording of monthly records is in place.

- 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 and learning is good. The teachers use a range of teaching approaches, explain concepts clearly and ensure that new content builds successfully on the pupils' previous learning. Bright, print-rich classrooms provide supportive learning environments and resources are used meaningfully to inform

teaching and learning. To build constructively on established practices, further promotion of collaborative learning opportunities and the pupils' independent learning skills is recommended. Pupil questionnaires confirm that almost all pupils enjoy their lessons and learning. Parental questionnaire responses indicate that almost all parents are happy with the quality of teaching in the school.

- Individual pupil progress is monitored carefully through the use of a good variety of assessment approaches.

- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán oiriúnach. Cothaíonn na hoidí scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go rialta agus baineann siad feidhm fhiúntach as rainn agus amhráin chun fuaim agus rithim na teanga a chur ar chluasa na ndaltaí. Leagtar béim mhór ar an gcur chuige cumarsáide i gcuid de na ranganna agus moltar go gcuirfí an sárchleachtas seo i bhfeidhm sna ranganna uilig. Ar an iomlán, léann an cuid is mó de na daltaí sna meán- agus sna hardranganna le líofacht oiriúnach, ach is gá aird níos forleithne a dhíriú ar dhea-fhoghraíocht. Faigheann na daltaí deiseanna chun scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus scríbhneoireacht phearsanta a chleachtadh.

  Overall teaching and learning in Irish is of an appropriate standard. The teachers develop the pupils' listening skills on a regular basis and there is very effective use of songs and rhymes to reinforce the sound and rhythm of the language. High priority is given to the communicative approach in some classes and it is recommended this excellent practice be implemented consistently across the school. Overall, most pupils in middle and senior classes read with appropriate fluency. However, it is advised to focus more closely on the promotion of accurate pronunciation. *The pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in both functional and personal writing.*

- Effective practice is in evidence in the teaching and learning of English. A variety of approaches is implemented appropriately to promote reading skills and these include early intervention, the teaching of comprehension strategies, the use of class novels and the promotion of reading for pleasure. The pupils have regular opportunities to develop their oral language skills. However, there is scope to develop the pupils' expressive oral language skills further, using focused language-learning activities, drawn from specific curriculum objectives. The recitation and composition of poetry by pupils is good. All pupils engage in a broad range of writing tasks across the genres and some good quality examples are evident.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is commendable. Considerable emphasis is given to the consolidation of number facts and the practice of computational skills. Good practice was observed in a number of classrooms, where pupils engage in group activities and where there is a positive emphasis on talk, discussion and problem-solving. These methodologies should be implemented consistently throughout the school Pupil questionnaires indicate that most pupils feel that they are doing well at Mathematics.

- Much good work is in evidence in the teaching and learning of Drama. The pupils experience a balanced programme which emphasises exploring and making drama, and also reflecting on it. Lessons incorporate the elements of Drama and the teachers employ a range of strategies to promote pupil participation. Drama is integrated successfully with other areas of the curriculum, particularly English and Visual Arts.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The approach to providing for pupils with special educational needs in this school is well organised. There is a focus on addressing the specific needs of pupils and the highly committed team works co-operatively with the class teachers and parents of the pupils. The school employs both in-class and withdrawal approaches of support. A range of methodologies is employed and pupils engage purposefully in the lessons. There is a good emphasis on the development of the pupils' literacy, numeracy and social skills.

- Provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is of a high quality. Sessions are well focused and emphasise pupils' acquisition and use of target language. Effective team teaching approaches are also being implemented in this area.

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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 of Management of St. Mary's Boys' National School, Ferrybank, wishes to thank the DES inspectors for the professional, courteous manner in which they carried out the Whole School Evaluation.

The Board notes the contents of the report on the Whole School Evaluation carried out in March 2012.

We welcome the positivity of the report and the affirmation of the teaching standards being implemented which fosters easy learning in a happy, safe and comfortable environment.

The Board members are grateful that the Inspectorate acknowledged the level of co-operation between staff and parents resulting in each child being given every opportunity to take full advantage of all aspects of the primary school curriculum.

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 Board and staff welcome the advice and recommendations contained in the WSE report. At Board and staff meetings the report has been analysed closely and the recommendations are being addressed in a collaborative manner going forward.