An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Saint Patrick's Boys' Junior National School
Bóthar Brugha, Drogheda, County Louth
Uimhir rolla: 17949O

Date of inspection: 1 May 2015

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Saint Patrick's Boys' Junior National School is an all-boys' junior school catering for pupils from junior infants to second class. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and participates in Delivering Educational Improvement in Schools (DEIS) Band Two, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Current enrolment is 310 pupils. Attendance levels are good, having shown recent improvement. 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 school is managed carefully by the board of management.
- The school benefits from the purposeful and dynamic leadership of the principal and in-school management team.
- A nurturing school culture exists where the holistic education of pupils is a priority.
- School staff is committed to the school, with lessons and various learning initiatives being delivered in a structured and stimulating manner.
- Pupils apply themselves to their work in a focused and enthusiastic way.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics and Gaeilge is very good.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is delivered in a vibrant, warm and deliberate manner.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- School accounts should be certified annually.
- A common approach to teachers' short-term planning should be established.
- The school should plan more deliberately for the identification and development of pupils' oral language skills.
- The school should examine wider opportunities for peer and pupil self-assessment.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed carefully by the board of management. Meetings are held regularly. It is recommended that school accounts be certified annually. The board's priorities include the management of resources, the continued development and upkeep of the school and its grounds and the promotion of a nurturing, inclusive school environment. It is recommended that meetings be attended by appointed board members only.

- The principal works in a vibrant and dynamic manner, providing strong and purposeful leadership across curricular, pastoral and organisational domains. She is keenly interested in the progress of all pupils and the development of pedagogy which is both inclusive and directed. The principal is ably supported by the in-school management team who work in a focused and collaborative manner to support the daily operation of the school and to manage a range of organisational and curricular initiatives. It is recommended that duties pertaining to posts of responsibility be reviewed and, in some cases, delineated more specifically.

- The school utilises a broad range of resources. It is well maintained and presents as a very stimulating environment with a wide variety of the pupils' work on display. Ancillary staff contributes significantly to the efficient operation of the school. While the school makes very good use of information and communication technology (ICT), it is recommended that an e-learning plan to progress digital literacy be developed.

- The management of pupils is of a very high standard. During the evaluation, they presented as contented learners and conducted themselves very commendably in all learning settings. Teachers interacted with pupils in a very affirming and courteous manner.

- High-quality communication practices are in operation. The school benefits from the support of an industrious parents' association. The school is advised to make use of the report templates of the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) when reporting on pupil progress to parents. Data from questionnaires indicate that a very high proportion of parents think that teaching is good in the school and that their child is doing well in school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. A broad range of practical organisational policies has been developed. Curricular policies provide many useful guidelines for content delivery and learning activities. Continuous school self-review and the associated examination of policies will further refine their value. It is recommended that all school policies include a date of ratification and review.

- The school has engaged proactively with the school self-evaluation process, with commendable use of peer reflection. A school improvement plan for literacy has been established with clear targets and associated actions.

- All teachers prepare good long-term plans, with content being delineated in a clear and progressional manner. There is some variety in the quality of teachers' short-term planning; some teachers plan very well, but in some cases there is scope for development. Where short-term planning was very good, objectives, content, differentiation, methodologies, linkage, integration and assessment were clearly delineated. It is recommended that a common approach to short-term planning be

established, grounded in current good practices. Monthly progress reports are provided; it is recommended that regular analysis of curriculum strand coverage be undertaken at a whole-school level to ensure that appropriate curriculum coverage is occurring.

- 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

- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go han-mhaith. Cruthaítear atmaisféar dearfach don Ghaeilge. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as raon d'acmhainní. Cuirtear béim chuí ar amhráin, dánta, scéalta agus cluichí teanga. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh agus tairbhe as na ceachtanna agus glacann said páirt ghníomhach iontu. Cuirtear béim inmholta ar bhriathra agus léiríonn na daltaí cumas labharta an-mhaith, le stór leathan focal. I ranganna áirithe, baintear sár-úsáid as dráma, agus obair bheirte chun foclóir nua a mhúineadh agus chun na daltaí a mhealladh chun cainte. Moltar go ndéanfadh an scoil scrúdú ar mhodhanna a d'fhéadfaí a chur i bhfeidhm chun an dea-chleachtas seo a roinnt agus a fhorbairt tríd an scoil. Baintear úsáid mhaith as an nGaeilge mar theanga chaidrimh i rith an lae i gcuid mhór de na ranganna. B'fhiú an dea-cleachtas seo a leathnú tríd an scoil de réir mar is cuí. Dírítear aird inmholta ar fhorbairt scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta. Is féidir leis na daltaí abairtí simplí a chumadh agus a scríobh. Léann siad go han-mhaith.

- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. A positive atmosphere towards Irish is promoted. The teachers make effective use of a range of resources. Appropriate emphasis is placed on songs, poems, stories and language games. It is evident that pupils derive enjoyment and benefit from lessons and they actively partake in them. Praiseworthy emphasis is placed on verbs and pupils show very good speaking capability, with a broad store of vocabulary. In certain classes, great use is made of drama and pair work to teach new vocabulary and to encourage the pupils to speak. It is recommended that the school examine approaches that could be implemented to share and develop this good practice throughout the school. Good use is made of Irish as a communication language throughout the day in most classrooms. It would be worthwhile to extend this good practice throughout the school as appropriate. Praiseworthy emphasis is placed on the development of reading and writing skills. The pupils can construct and write simple sentences. They read very well.*

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Phonological and word-attack skills are developed systematically. Through the use of differentiated reading approaches and various initiatives, pupils' interest and enjoyment of reading are purposefully developed. Effective use is made of poetry and rhymes to foster and develop language. To further extend pupils' oral language abilities, attention should be given to the identification and specific teaching of subject-specific language. While pupils engage productively in writing across a range of genres, there is some scope to improve the quality of handwriting and work presentation. The school should devise and implement a plan for the development of handwriting across the school. Play-based learning approaches are employed in junior classrooms through the use of the *Aistear* Framework. There is scope to create a more integrated plan for *Aistear*, which outlines learning objectives and includes assessment strategies.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Pupils enjoy the subject and participate enthusiastically in lessons. Very good emphasis is placed on the development of number skills and mental arithmetic. Concepts are clearly explained and

are underpinned by the effective use of concrete resources, collaborative learning and active hands-on learning experiences. Suitable emphasis is placed on problem solving and on the interrogation and discussion of concepts. In so doing, content is linked appropriately to the pupils' life experiences. The school is well presented as a mathematics-rich environment. Good provision is in place for differentiation and assessment.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education is very good. Lessons are well structured with an appropriate focus on specific skill development. Appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities are employed. Pupils are active in exploring, experimenting and expressing themselves during physical activity. Resources, equipment, games and collaborative learning experiences are used fruitfully to give the pupils a sense of achievement and enjoyment.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in this school is very good. Making effective use of resources, discussion and hands-on learning activities, pupils are provided with varied learning experiences. They are enthusiastic about their learning and apply themselves to tasks with focus and vigour. Good assessment practices are in place, but in some settings there is potential for the wider use of progress records across the curriculum with associated regard for pupils' self-assessment and self-efficacy. Overall, good differentiation practices are in operation.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. A broad range of diagnostic and assessment tools is in use to identify pupils in need of support and to monitor their progress. Lessons observed during the evaluation were characterised by high-quality teacher-pupil interactions and by very good consolidation of learning. There is a good balance between in-class, withdrawal and station-teaching approaches to support pupils' learning. The special education team meets regularly to plan interventions and they implement a wide variety of programmes including Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery and Literacy Lift-off. Parents and relevant professionals are consulted on the design of support programmes. Individual learning plans are devised collaboratively for all pupils with SEN. In some instances, however, objectives are too general and the development of more specific and measurable learning targets is recommended. The effective use of running records and pupils' self-assessment observed in some settings should be extended across the school. It is recommended that parents receive a copy of the child's individual education plan (IEP).

- Support for pupils with English as an additional language is delivered in a structured and engaging manner, with very good use of resources, discussion and language-based activities. In some settings, more deliberate planning for cognitive applied language proficiency and the use of language logs should be considered. The special needs assistants work purposefully in co-operation with both mainstream and support teachers to meet the care and other needs of pupils. The School Completion Programme effectively complements the school's support structures.

- The school benefits from the work of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator who provides support in a structured and strategic manner. A range of programmes and initiatives is in place to empower parents to support their child's learning and to become involved in the life of the school.

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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. Patrick's Boys' National School welcomes the positive tone of this report and the affirmation of the work carried out in school by the staff, pupils and parents. The board is pleased that the report recognises the high standards of teaching and learning, the positive learning atmosphere of the school and the exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning of the pupils.

It also welcomes the very positive feedback from the parents during the course of the evaluation. The board of management believes that the positive findings recognise the dedication, competency and professionalism of the entire staff of the 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 board of management and the staff will continue to work closely together to implement the recommendations of the report. Since its completion, the staff has met and compiled a plan to address the main recommendations of the report. School accounts were sent for certification in May 2015.

A common approach to teachers' short-term planning has been established and agreed templates are in place. The school appreciates the opportunity to use the recommendations in its self-evaluation and self-improvement processes. As a first step we are working on the development of peer and pupil self-assessment as part of our school self-evaluation process (2015-2018) and will be included in the school improvement plan.