An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Peter's National School
Snugboro, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 19916J

Date of inspection: 2 February 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

St Peter's NS is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam situated three kilometres north-west of Castlebar. Currently there are 297 pupils enrolled and there are eleven mainstream classes. The school has experienced considerable growth in the recent past. A very attractive extension was opened in 2009. The building is very well maintained and presented.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts. 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 board of management has been very effective in providing good quality accommodation and resources.
- A strong culture of teamwork and co-operation has been fostered by the principal.
- Some very effective teaching was observed in both Irish and English.
- Very good quality curricular plans have been developed.
- There are very useful strategies in place on a whole-school basis for the delivery of the visual arts programme.
- The parents' association has been very effective in supporting school activities and providing resources for the pupils.
- Pupils are courteous, diligent and very well behaved.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should review the current staffing arrangement to ensure a more equitable distribution of pupil numbers across all classes throughout the school.
- More effective use should be made of the assessment data available to ensure that teaching and learning activities are more closely matched to individual pupils' needs.
- Systems should be put in place to facilitate the tracking and monitoring of individual pupils' progress.
- The role of the principal as instructional leader should be developed to ensure that there is full implementation of the school's curriculum plans.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very committed to the school and manages the provision of resources and accommodation effectively. It has recently engaged in the review of standardised test results. This good work is commended. It is recommended that the board publish and circulate an annual report to inform the wider school community about its work.

- The principal, who has overseen the growth and development of the school in recent years, exhibits a strong commitment to the school. She has been effective in fostering a positive atmosphere in the school. The role of principal as instructional leader should be developed to ensure the full implementation of the school's plans and policies. It is recommended that more formal structures for in-school management team meetings be established to ensure on-going school improvement. It is further recommended that the posts of responsibility be reviewed to allow for greater clarity in the distribution of tasks.

- All classrooms are attractively presented and there is a plentiful supply of resource materials available to support teaching and learning. It is recommended that further provision be made for information and communication technology (ICT). The board should also review the current staffing arrangements to ensure that, as far as possible, there is an equitable distribution of pupils across all classes throughout the school.

- The management of communication with the wider school community is very good. The school website provides useful information about the school. In their responses to questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation, almost all parents feel that the school welcomes them and they express a high level of satisfaction with arrangements for parent-teacher meetings and school reports.

- The management of pupils in this school is very good. Pupils fully engaged with the learning activities provided and interacted positively with their teachers and with each other. Pupil questionnaires indicate that almost all pupils know the school rules and feel safe at school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. Curricular plans are detailed and provide clear guidance for the teaching of the curriculum throughout the school. It is now necessary to ensure that the implementation of these plans is advanced, carefully monitored and evaluated on a whole-school basis.

- A culture of self-evaluation has not yet been firmly established in this school. While standardised tests are carried out on an annual basis, the data gathered is not sufficiently utilised by the teachers to evaluate whole-school effectiveness. This data should be used to facilitate target setting for whole-school improvement. There is scope for development in the tracking and monitoring of individual pupils' progress.

- The quality of individual teacher planning is generally good with some very good quality plans observed. It is recommended that monthly progress records specify the curriculum objectives that have been successfully realised.

- 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 effective overall, with some exemplary practice observed. A very good range of methodologies, with an emphasis on activity-based learning, was in evidence. In order to cater more effectively for the varying learning needs of pupils, lessons need to be clearly differentiated, particularly for English and Mathematics. Team-teaching and in-class support have been established in the school but these approaches need to be more carefully targetted to meet individual pupils' needs.

- Tá éagsúlacht le feiceáil i gcáilíocht teagaisc, foghlama agus caighdeáin na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge ó rang go rang. Tugtar faoi deara cleachtas sármhaith i múineadh na Gaeilge i ranganna éagsúla. Sna cásanna seo cuirtear béim ar chothú grá don teanga agus léirigh na daltaí ardchaighdeán in úsáid an teanga. Baintear úsáid mhaith as drámaíocht agus as obair bheirte chun deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí a scileanna cumarsáide a threisiú. I ranganna eile áfach, bhí easpa dul chun cinn le feiceáil agus bhí deacrachtaí suntasacha ag na daltaí Gaeilge a labhairt go líofa. Moltar don scoil cuspóirí foghlama a aithint go soiléir agus straitéisí a chur i bhfeidhm chun monatóireacht chruinn a choimeád ar dul chun cinn na ndaltaí.

- *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish varies from class to class. Very good quality teaching of Irish was observed in some classes. In these cases an emphasis was placed on fostering a love of the language and pupils demonstrated a very high standard in the use of the language. Good use was made of drama and pair work to provide the pupils with opportunities to enrich their communication skills. However, in some classrooms, a lack of progress was evident and pupils struggled to speak Irish fluently. The school is advised to identify clearly learning outcomes to be achieved and to implement strategies to facilitate accurate monitoring of pupils' progress made.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Very effective strategies are in place to develop emergent reading and writing skills. Some very good practice to enhance pupils' oral language skills was observed but there was a lack of consistency in this work across the school. The school should review its current provision of in-class support and ensure that there is greater differentiation in the programme taught and better provision for individual pupils' needs. Expectations regarding the quality of pupils' written work could be higher, both in terms of the variety of genres covered and the presentation of the work.

- Good quality work was observed in the teaching of Mathematics. Some of the very effective practice observed included well-resourced activity-based learning, a variety of methodologies in use and consolidation of concepts taught. There is a need for more careful monitoring of pupils' achievement with more frequent assessment and a greater level of differentiated teaching.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts is very good. Very effective whole-school strategies are in place to engage pupils with art in the environment. The school has participated in the *Per cent for Art* project and pupils have contributed to the creation of very interesting pieces of work through this exercise. Pupils'

art portfolios indicate a good range of work covered with very good use made of a wide array of resources. It is evident that the emphasis has been correctly placed on creativity and self-expression.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with differing needs. It is very well resourced in terms of special education personnel and the team includes resource teachers, learning-support teachers and teachers for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- Very good quality teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs were observed during the course of the evaluation. Individual education plans (IEPs) reflected priority learning needs identified in the relevant professional reports. These are shared with parents and class teachers. There is a need for greater collaboration between class teachers and special education teachers to ensure consistency of approach in addressing pupils' needs.

- Pupil progress in the special education setting is carefully monitored and records indicate that these pupils are making satisfactory progress in line with their abilities.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. St Peter's NS is central to the life of the Snugboro community. The parents' association provides valuable support to the work of the school and there is a strong emphasis on collaboration in the school's culture.

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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. Peter's N.S., Snugboro sincerely thank and acknowledge with appreciation the courtesy of the inspectorate during the course of the Whole School Evaluation. The board notes and is taking on board the findings and recommendations in respect of the overall report and of the four subjects evaluated therein. The Board of Management also wishes to take this opportunity to thank the staff, parents and pupils for their good work, on-going commitment and dedication towards the provision of primary education and life-long learning at St. Peter's National School.