An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Stackallen National School
Stackallen, Navan, County Meath
Uimhir rolla: 01309L

Date of inspection: 5th October 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Stackallen National School, located in the Navan hinterland in County Meath, is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school currently has 204 pupils distributed across 8 mainstream classes. Attendance levels are very good. During this whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Science was inspected. 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.

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The school is characterised by an affirming and welcoming ethos.
- Effective organisational and instructional leadership is provided by the principal.
- The pro-active board of management supports the ongoing development of the school in a capable manner.
- The conscientious teaching staff effectively deploys a wide range of teaching methodologies to provide stimulating learning experiences for pupils.
- Very good communication contributes to the strong sense of community which exists between the school staff, the board of management and the parents' committee.
- Pupils are managed effectively and demonstrate positive learning outcomes across all curricular areas evaluated.
- School facilities, including the attractive garden and well-designed play areas provide a learning and play environment of very high quality.
- School planning and self-evaluation practices are of a very good quality.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Further development of in-class support models of team-teaching should focus on the systematic development of specific literacy skills in accordance with pupils' prioritised needs.
- Is féidir togáil ar fhoghlaim na ndaltaí i nGaeilge a thuilleadh trí bhéim níos láidre a chur ar fhorbairt a scileanna saorscríbhneoireachta. *(Pupils' learning in Irish can be further developed by placing a stronger emphasis on the development of their independent writing skills.*)

3. Quality of School Management

- The pro-active board of management supports the organisation and development of the school in an efficient manner. A number of subcommittees have been successfully established to manage various aspects of the new building project. Board members demonstrate commendable awareness about school activities and are actively involved in policy development and review. The board is advised to review the organisation of recreational breaks within the school day to ensure compliance with the *Time in School* Circular 11/95.

- The principal demonstrates effective leadership skills as he works collaboratively to cultivate a positive respectful learning environment. He provides strong instructional leadership and has successfully implemented a wide range of valuable initiatives which has contributed to the high quality of teaching and learning within this school. Questionnaires distributed to parents during the evaluation indicate high levels of satisfaction with the management of the school.

- The principal is currently supported by an acting deputy principal who fulfils an appropriate balance of duties in an enthusiastic and capable manner. Purposeful curricular leadership is evident in this school. All staff members are commended for their willingness to embrace curricular and organisational duties to ensure implementation of a whole-school development plan.

- The management of pupils is very good. Pupils behaved courteously and co-operatively during the period of evaluation. A commendable range of opportunities is provided for pupils to engage in creative and co-operative play during recreational periods. Regular whole-school assemblies contribute to the high levels of pupil motivation evident within the school. Analysis of pupil questionnaires, distributed during the evaluation, indicate positive pupil attitudes towards school and learning.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. Staff members are suitably deployed and demonstrate considerable commitment to ongoing professional development. An industrious work ethic and commitment to the caring, affirming ethos of the school is in evidence among school personnel. The contribution of all ancillary staff to this ethos is notable.

- The summer works scheme has been utilised to improve school facilities which are clean and well maintained. The school garden and the imagination playground provide invaluable opportunities for creative and co-operative play and learning. An extensive range of resources is used purposefully across all areas of the curriculum evaluated. Information and communications technology is used regularly as a medium of teaching and learning within this school.

- Very good communication channels contribute to the strong sense of community which exists between the board of management, school staff, the parents' association and the parent body. Positive parental feedback regarding the quality of home-school communication and the educational provision for their children was evident from the questionnaires returned by the parent body. The school, together with the hardworking parents' association, promotes active parental involvement in a range of school activities which includes a prize winning school garden.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. A range of curricular and organisational policies has been developed collaboratively which reflect the authentic context of this school. Clearly delineated action plans support the implementation of appropriate programmes. Systematic analysis of assessment data informs the priorities identified by the school and also ensures evidence-based school review of progress made.

- All teachers prepare suitable long and short term plans which reflect agreed whole-school approaches. A whole-school approach to teachers' monthly reports ensures consistency within the mainstream classes.

- 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. Strong emphasis is placed on effective questioning by teachers to facilitate pupils' emotional and cognitive development. A suitable range of teaching methodologies is effectively employed and features of competent practice include effective cross-curricular integration and purposeful facilitation of discovery learning approaches. Pupils apply themselves to tasks with enthusiasm and complete their work to a high standard. Teachers are commended for the continuous and affirming manner in which pupils' work is corrected. An appropriate balance of teacher-led and pupil-led assessment practices is in evidence.

- Cothaítear timpeallacht fhoghlama fhiúntach don Ghaeilge sa scoil seo. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as raon oiriúnach de mhodhanna múinte agus d'acmhainní éagsúla le cinntiú go mbaineann na daltaí torthaí foghlama maithe amach. Baintear úsáid inmholta as an drámaíocht go háirithe chun suim agus cumas na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go torthúil. Eagraítear gníomhaíochtaí fiúntacha go rianúil chun scileanna éisteachta na ndalatí a fhorbairt go cumasach. Léann fórmhór na ndaltaí ábhair éagsúla le tuiscint agus le cruinneas. Is féidir togáil ar fhoghlaim na ndaltaí i nGaeilge a thuilleadh trí bhéim níos láidre a chur ar fhorbairt a scileanna saorscríbhneoireachta.

- *A valuable learning environment for Irish is nurtured in this school. Teachers effectively use a range of teaching methodologies and various resources to ensure pupils achieve positive learning outcomes. In particular, drama is used in a praiseworthy way to successfully develop pupils' interest and abilities. Worthwhile activities are regularly organised to develop competent pupil listening skills. The majority of pupils read various materials with understanding and accuracy. It is possible to enhance pupils' learning by placing a stronger emphasis on the development of their independent writing skills.*

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the incremental development of pupils' oral language skills throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate confident mastery of a wide range of language forms including debating and poetry appreciation. Pupils' phonological awareness and word recognition skills are systematically developed. A whole school emphasis on comprehension ensures that pupils are exposed to a variety of reading material although

there is some potential for earlier use of the novel in some classrooms. Consideration should now be given to the systematic development of specific literacy skills using the team teaching model. High quality provision is in place for the use of the writing process. Pupils' independent writing in a variety of genre is of a high standard. Penmanship and presentation of written work is praiseworthy.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. A whole-school promotion of mental arithmetic and the development of pupils' problem solving strategies have contributed to the positive learning outcomes which are in evidence. Lessons make suitable use of concrete resources to provide pupils with appropriate hands-on learning experiences. Lesson content is frequently connected with the life experience and environment of the pupils, but there is some potential for the further development of such practices. Mathematical language is well emphasised and plenary sessions are used to good effect. Teachers make very good provision for collaborative learning activities and differentiate in accordance with pupils' needs.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is very good. The school actively strives to celebrate and promote Science through various initiatives which include Green Flag activities. Lesson content is effectively linked to the life experience and environment of the pupils and is frequently integrated with other curriculum areas. Suitable provision is in place for all strands of the curriculum, particularly *Living Things*. Scientific skills are suitably developed and pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of the concept of fair-testing. Pupils engage purposefully with the *Make and Design* element of the curriculum.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school's inclusive learning environment and strong commitment to the pastoral care of pupils permeate the high quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs. (SEN). Systems have been successfully established within the school community to ensure that learning difficulties are detected as early as possible and addressed in an appropriate manner. The staged approach is in evidence. Teachers work collaboratively within the school and with other professionals to ensure support provided is aligned to pupils' prioritised needs.

- Informative learning schemes and individual education plans have been devised to support the implementation of suitable programmes for pupils. Standardised and diagnostic assessment data are appropriately analysed to devise, implement and review programmes of learning for pupils commensurate with their needs.

- Lessons are well structured and teachers employ a suitable range of strategies and resources to support teaching and learning within this context. Some creditable in-class support has been established. Further development of team teaching is recommended to support the systematic development of specific literacy skills across particular class groupings.

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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 Stackallen NS welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation carried out recently. The Board would especially like to record its appreciation of both inspectors and to thank them for their professional and courteous approach in their dealings with the entire school community. We are happy to note the inspectors' recognition of the following in our school:

The commitment of all concerned to providing a high quality education for all the pupils.
The strong sense of community and the degree to which parents are involved in many aspects of school life.
The overall management of the school and the effective leadership of the Principal.
The high standards of teaching and learning especially in the area of special needs.

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 report contains a number of welcome recommendations in relation to the development of existing good practices within the school and measures are in place to further expand our work in the areas of team teaching and scríbhneoireacht na Gaeilge.