

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Ratoath Senior NS
Ratoath, Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla: 20200T

Date of inspection: 30 January 2014



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Ratoath Senior NS is located in County Meath and caters for boys and girls from third to sixth class. The school is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath. At the time of the evaluation there were 451 pupils enrolled in the school. Attendance levels throughout the school are very good. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eleven mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings.

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 displays a strong sense of commitment to the development of the school and board members perform their duties in a dedicated and effective manner.
- The organisational and curriculum leadership of the principal and in-school management team have a positive impact on teaching and learning in the school.
- Well-developed collaborative approaches to planning and school self-evaluation enable the purposeful sharing of expertise and experience among teachers.
- The management of pupil behaviour is highly commendable and pupils in all classes are commended for the courtesy they demonstrate to each other, to their teachers and other staff members and to visitors.
- Teaching and learning in each of the four curriculum areas evaluated are of a very high quality.
- Approaches to assessment are sophisticated and successful, and incorporate highly commendable approaches to including pupils' own assessment of their progress across the range of the curriculum.
- The quality of supports provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good and is characterised by a highly collaborative, well-coordinated and successful approach to addressing pupils' identified learning needs.

The following **main recommendation** is made:

- It is recommended that the proposed review by staff of approaches to differentiation ensures that differentiation strategies are outlined explicitly in short-term plans for all classes.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board plays an active role in the management of school affairs. Board members display a strong sense of commitment to the development of the school and they perform their duties in a dedicated and effective manner. The board is actively involved in the shaping of school policy and in the development of curriculum planning. Appropriate attention is paid by the board to the prudent management of school finances, to the maintenance and upkeep of the school premises and grounds, and to health and safety issues.
- The in-school management team operates very effectively to promote the ongoing development of the school. This team is led very capably by the principal, whose commitment to the school and to the well-being of all members of the school community is admirable. Her organisational skills are well utilised in administrative areas and her role in curriculum leadership has a positive impact on the development of teaching and learning in the school. She is supported very well by the other members of the in-school management team, each of whom displays a clear understanding of their leadership roles. Many examples of this leadership were demonstrated very effectively in the course of the evaluation.
- The quality of the management of resources is very high. A wide range of stimulating resources is provided to enhance teaching and learning and these resources are used in a commendable fashion throughout the school. Careful planning for the provision of resources ensures that the school is well stocked with high-quality teaching aids and materials to facilitate active learning. These resources are augmented by a wide range of teacher-designed illustrative material. Very good use of information and communications technology (ICT) facilitates the sharing of teacher-made resources throughout the school.
- Parents are actively involved in the life of the school. The parents' association meets regularly and maintains regular contact with the principal and board of management. Proposed changes to school policy are discussed at these meetings. Parents play an active role in many school events. Very good arrangements are in place to ensure that parents receive detailed information regarding pupils' progress. In a questionnaire issued to parents, almost all respondents agreed that the school was well run, that their children enjoyed school and that the quality of teaching in the school was good.
- The management of pupils is highly commendable. Very effective strategies are in use to promote positive behaviour throughout the school. During the evaluation, pupils' behaviour was exemplary, and all interactions between teachers and pupils and among pupils were respectful and affirming. Teachers commend pupils regularly for their efforts and achievements in a range of activities, and this practice is very successful in promoting active and responsible citizenship. Pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that almost all feel safe in school and in the playground and that they believe theirs to be a good school. Pupils in all classes are commended for the courtesy they demonstrate to each other, to their teachers and other staff members and to visitors.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. Whole-school planning is collaborative and thoughtful and is focused on pupil learning. Very good linkage within and across different curriculum areas is a notable feature of planning.

- The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation are of a high quality. The well-developed collaborative approaches to planning in the school enable the purposeful sharing of expertise and experience among teachers. Teachers reflect carefully on how well lessons achieve the intended learning outcomes for pupils. Evidence from a number of sources is used perceptively to inform whole-school planning and self-evaluation processes, resulting in the development of focused and practical strategies to effect continuous improvement.
- Classroom planning is very good. Long-term planning is very effective in informing short-term planning, which in turn very effectively identifies suitable learning objectives for pupils. A broad range of learning activities is planned in order to facilitate high levels of active and engaged learning by pupils. Learning activities and contexts are differentiated so that all pupils are supported in their learning and are challenged suitably during lessons. It is noted that the staff is considering how approaches to differentiation are addressed in short-term planning. It is recommended that this review ensures that differentiation strategies are outlined explicitly in short-term plans for all 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

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go han-mhaith sa scoil. Baineann na hoidí úsáid as raon breá modhanna múinte, soláthraíonn siad áiseanna cuí chun ceachtanna spreagúla a chur i láthair, agus stiúránn siad na ceachtanna go héifeachtach chun scileanna teanga na ndaltaí a fheabhsú go córasach. Sna ceachtanna a breathnaíodh, cuireadh béim shuntasach ar an teanga nua a mhúineadh go spreagúil agus tugadh go leor deiseanna do na daltaí an teanga a chleachtadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm i suímh chumarsáideacha. Baineann na hoidí sár-úsáid as an teicneolaíocht faisnéise agus cumarsáide (TFC) le linn ceachtanna Gaeilge. Tá leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn le sonrú ó rang go rang. Glacann na daltaí i ngach rang páirt toilteanach i gceachtanna Gaeilge agus baintear dea-úsáid as drámaíocht chun deiseanna rannpháirtíochta a sholáthar dóibh. Is féidir leo labhairt go leanúnach ar théamaí éagsúla agus léann siad téacsanna oiriúnacha le tuiscint agus le muinín. Tá raon leathan dánta curtha de ghlanmheabhair acu agus aithrisíonn siad iad le taitneamh. Canann siad stór breá amhrán chomh maith. Is mór is fiú an cleachtas seo chun a stór teanga a shaibhriú. Eagraítear raon leathan de chleachtaí scríbhneoireachta dóibh agus scríobhann siad sleachta gearra ar raon maith téamaí. Déantar a gcuid saothar sa Ghaeilge a chéiliúradh go héifeachtach sna taispeántais tarraingteacha tríd an scoil.
- *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is very good in the school. Teachers use a fine range of teaching methods, they provide appropriate resources to present stimulating lessons and they conduct lessons effectively to improve pupils' language skills systematically across all of the curriculum strands. In the lessons that were observed, significant emphasis was placed on teaching in a stimulating fashion and plentiful opportunities were given to pupils to practise the language and to apply it in communicative settings. Teachers make excellent use of ICT in Irish lessons. Continuity and progression are evident from class to class. Pupils in every class take part willingly in Irish lessons and good use is made of drama to provide them with opportunities to participate. They can speak continuously on a range of topics and they read appropriate texts with understanding and confidence. They have memorised a wide range of poems which they recite with enjoyment. They also sing a fine repertoire of songs. This practice is worthwhile as it enriches their store of language. A wide range of writing exercises is*

organised and the pupils write short pieces on a good range of themes. Their work in Irish is celebrated effectively in the attractive displays throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. The pupils have very good oral language skills and they can express themselves confidently and coherently. It is very commendable that careful attention is paid to the development of pupils' vocabulary across all curriculum areas. The quality of pupils' attainment in reading is very good. Teachers are very effective at ensuring that the varying needs and abilities of pupils are met and that there is progression in pupils' reading achievements. The development of pupils' comprehension skills is undertaken very skilfully and systematically. Some very good examples of pupils engaging in thought-provoking discussion about the novels they were reading were observed. The quality of pupils' attainment in writing is of a very high standard. A wide range of genres has been explored by pupils across the full range of the curriculum and they have produced work of a very high quality. Penmanship, punctuation, grammar and spelling are also of a very high quality.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are very well structured with close attention paid to ensuring that there is a clear objective and a logical development to lessons and that due cognisance is taken of different pupil ability levels. Very good attention is paid to the teaching and correct use of mathematical terms and language. A strong emphasis is placed on situating mathematical concepts within contexts which allow pupils to explore their real-life application. Concrete and visual resources together with active learning methodologies enhance pupils' conceptual understanding and enthusiasm for Mathematics. Pupils demonstrate a high level of competence in the computational and procedural aspects of Mathematics. It is particularly commendable that pupils have a very good capacity to select and apply a wide-range of appropriate strategies to the solving of mathematical questions and problems.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very high. The implementation of the programme is positively affected by the characteristic spirit of the school. Principles of inclusivity and equality are promoted actively throughout the school and the individuality of all pupils is cherished. The school is an attractive and secure learning environment in which pupils are evidently comfortable. The SPHE curriculum is taught using a well-structured approach in all classes. Each curriculum strand is addressed in a coherent and well-balanced whole-school manner. Suitable resources are utilised in the teaching of the programme and these resources are augmented with additional material designed by the teachers to facilitate active pupil engagement in lessons. Lessons are thought-provoking and focused.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Thorough, thoughtful and collaborative preparation for lessons ensures that lessons are presented in a stimulating and focused manner in both mainstream and support settings. The level of pupil engagement during lessons is admirable. Learning outcomes in all of the curriculum areas observed are of a very high standard. Approaches to assessment are sophisticated and successful. Teachers monitor pupils' work carefully and perceptively and use the assessment data they gather to inform future planning for classes and for individual pupils. Highly commendable approaches to including pupils' own assessment of their progress across the range of the curriculum are used throughout the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It is characterised by a well-coordinated and highly collaborative approach in which mainstream and support teachers, the principal, other professionals, and parents share knowledge and expertise. This contributes to the design of interventions for pupils that are appropriate to their

learning needs. A broad range of assessment instruments and approaches is used perceptively to select pupils for supplementary teaching and to diagnose learning needs. Individual education plans are devised for pupils who require them. The staged approach is used effectively to ensure that individual pupils' learning needs are addressed in the most appropriate setting. Special education teachers are allocated specific responsibilities which include supporting pupils in mainstream settings and by withdrawal for individual or small-group tuition. Teaching is targeted at addressing pupils' identified learning needs. Teachers monitor pupils' progress perceptively, and following regular review of pupil progress, they adjust learning targets in line with the assessment data. Pupils are supported very capably by a team of special needs assistants who work in close collaboration with teachers. There is regular and purposeful communication with parents with regard to pupils' progress.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Several effective mechanisms are used to ensure that parents are kept informed of school events. Parents support a wide range of curriculum initiatives and extra-curricular activities. The school authorities attest to the support of parents in funding additional resources for pupils with special educational needs. The school organises meetings with all parents to discuss their children's progress in school. Additional meetings are held as required. Parents receive written reports twice yearly. Procedures to address parents' concerns are clear and are communicated to all parents. Parents' questionnaire responses also indicate high levels of satisfaction with the frequency and quality of communication between school and home.