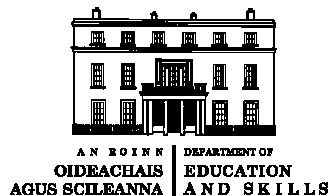


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**St. Patrick's National School,**  
**Slane, County Meath**  
**Uimhir rolla: 18040L**

**Date of inspection: 3 October 2014**



## 1. Introduction

St. Patrick's National School, Slane, County Meath has 283 pupils enrolled and their attendance is very good. There are ten mainstream teachers and three teachers who support pupils with special educational needs employed in the school. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. 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:

- An affirming, inclusive school ethos, characterised by commendable pastoral care and high expectations for pupils' learning, is in evidence.
- The board of management and the parents' association support the organisation and development of the school in a very competent manner.
- The principal provides effective leadership and management.
- Staff approach their work with commendable enthusiasm and diligence to provide high quality provision for pupils.
- School self-evaluation practices are well developed with staff demonstrating very good capacity to sustain high standards and secure ongoing school improvement.
- The pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation and positive learning outcomes in the curricular areas evaluated. Their penmanship and presentation of written work is particularly praiseworthy.
- The attractive, well-maintained outdoor and indoor school facilities provide a stimulating learning environment for pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The current duties of the in-school management team (ISM) should be formally reviewed to strengthen curricular leadership roles and to further align them to evolving school priorities.
- A consistent whole-school approach to tracking the longitudinal progress of pupils should be adopted.
- Additional use of diagnostic assessment is recommended to ensure that targets set for each pupil with special educational needs (SEN) are specific, measureable and closely aligned to their prioritised needs.
- Moltar clár céimnithe do labhairt na Gaeilge a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn uile-scoile. (*A progressive oral Irish plan should be devised and implemented on a whole-school basis*).

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The board of management supports the organisation and development of the school in a competent and conscientious manner. Present and previous boards have developed school facilities and resources to a very high standard.
- The overall quality of the work of the in-school management team is high. The principal provides effective leadership and management within the school community. Together with a caring and capable deputy principal, he nurtures an affirming, inclusive school environment characterised by commendable pastoral care and high expectations for pupils' learning. In collaboration with staff, the principal has introduced and embedded a number of practices which impact positively on pupils' learning.
- The ISM team currently consists of a deputy principal and three special duties post-holders who diligently discharge their remit of pastoral, curricular and organisational duties. It is recommended that post-holders' current duties be formally reviewed to strengthen curricular leadership roles and to further align them to evolving school priorities. The willingness and capacity of other staff members to accept responsibility for a range of curricular and co-curricular activities is worthy of note.
- The overall quality of the management of resources is very good. Teachers are appropriately deployed and avail of suitable professional development opportunities. Ancillary staff contributes significantly to the strong culture of care and the smooth running of the school. Classrooms are well presented with attractive curricular displays and the school garden provides an enriching outdoor learning environment. Information and communications technology resources and the recently developed school library are used purposefully. The school has invested in a range of mathematical resources which are used judiciously.
- The management of communications within the school community is very good. Appropriate communication channels have been established to ensure parents are well-informed of school activities and their children's progress. Responses to the parent questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the school. Representatives of the parents' association also attested to the high quality of provision for pupils. This association plays an active and valuable role in supporting the work of the school in a variety of ways which includes the successful operation of the book rental scheme.
- A range of organisational systems has been successfully established to ensure a well-ordered learning environment for pupils who demonstrate very good behavior and engagement in learning activities. Pupil involvement in the Green Schools programme is contributing to a strong sense of citizenship.

### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- Overall, the quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation is very good. An extensive range of organisational policies has been successfully developed and underpin the efficient operation of the school. Appropriate, contextualised curricular policies support the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum. Collaborative review of curricular and organisational whole-school policies is systematically undertaken.

- A positive culture of professional reflection has been successfully nurtured and the school has engaged in suitable school self-evaluation practices. A clearly delineated three year improvement plan for literacy and numeracy has been devised. Its careful whole-school implementation is impacting positively on teaching and learning.
- A whole-school approach to teachers' long and short term planning has been successfully adopted. The current format of monthly progress records should be reviewed to facilitate closer monitoring of curricular implementation throughout the school.
- 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, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers diligently deploy a suitable range of teaching methodologies, including co-operative and collaborative group work, to optimise pupil engagement in enriching learning activities. High quality teacher-pupil interactions are characterised by skilful questioning and constructive feedback. While considerable attention has been given to differentiating teaching in accordance with the range of pupil ability within the classroom there remains scope to further refine practices in relation to pupils with higher and lower abilities. Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to effectively monitor the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and mastery of skills in key curricular areas. An agreed, consistent whole-school approach to tracking the longitudinal progress of pupils would further enhance provision. The promotion of age-appropriate pupil self-assessment is commended and encouraged.
- Ar an iomlán tá caighdeán na foghlama agus an teagaisc sa Ghaeilge go maith. Baintear feidhm éifeachtach as an bhfilíocht i múineadh na teanga. Tá tuiscint mhaith ar an nGaeilge ag roinnt daltaí agus ar a gcumas struchtúr simplí a chur ar abairtí. Ní mór, áfach, gníomhaíochtaí éisteachta, lena bhfuil cuspóirí cinnte, a eagrú go rialta. Moltar clár céimnithe do labhairt na Gaeilge, bunaithe ar théamaí an churaclaim, a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn uile-scoile. Léann roinnt daltaí le cruinneas agus le tuiscint áirithe. Is gá, áfach, scileanna na léitheoireachta a mhúineadh go córasach le béim ar leith ar fhogharluach, ar thuiscint agus ar aithint na bhfocal. Tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta measartha. Ní mór deiseanna breise a sholáthar do na daltaí scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách a chleachtadh. Is inmholta mar a bhaintear úsáid as scrúduithe caighdeánithe chun gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a mheas.
- *Overall the standard of learning and teaching in Irish is good. Poetry is employed effectively in teaching the language. Some pupils have a good understanding of Irish and can construct simple sentences. Listening activities, with specific objectives, should be organised regularly, however. A whole-school progressive oral Irish plan, based on the curriculum themes, should be devised and implemented. Some pupils read with accuracy and a certain degree of understanding. It is necessary however, to teach reading skills systematically with particular emphasis placed on phonological awareness, on word recognition and understanding. The quality of writing is fair. Pupils should be afforded further opportunities to practise independent writing. It is praiseworthy that standardised tests are used to assess pupils' progress in Irish.*

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. A comprehensive whole-school plan guides the implementation of each strand and supports continuity in teaching and learning throughout the school. Regular provision is made for discrete oral language lessons which focus on the development of language skills as well as extending vocabulary. Very good provision for poetry is in evidence. Positive attitudes towards reading have been carefully nurtured and pupils demonstrate very good reading attainments overall. There is need to review some instructional reading material in some instances to ensure a more appropriate alignment with pupils' abilities. The effective use of novels and the explicit teaching of comprehension skills is commended. A whole-school commitment to all stages of the writing process together with the systematic development of a suitable range of writing genres contributes to the very high standards of pupils' independent creative writing. Cursive writing has been successfully developed throughout the school.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are well-structured and content is effectively linked to pupils' life experiences. An extensive range of resources is used purposefully and effectively to support teaching and learning. A whole-school approach to the use of mathematical language has been successfully adopted. Suitable emphasis is placed on the development of mental arithmetic and pupils demonstrate good knowledge of basic number facts. The implementation of valuable school improvement initiatives which includes *Ready, Set, Go Maths* and whole-school approaches to problem-solving has impacted positively on the development of pupils' mathematical skills. Their written work is carefully presented and monitored in a systematic, constructive manner.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Visual Arts is very good. The whole-school plan provides clear guidance for the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils are afforded suitable opportunities to explore and experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques through guided-discovery methods. Careful explanations and demonstrations enable the development of skills and the understanding of concepts. Positive affirmation, active engagement, peer co-operation and a sense of ownership of their work all serve to encourage and develop pupils' forms of expression. During the looking and responding elements of lessons significant opportunities are given to pupils to pose questions, reflect on what they see and to become critically aware. Further assessment strategies should be used and systematic records of achievement be maintained on a whole-school basis. Overall, pupils' creativity and expression together with their artistic skills are being successfully developed.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- A strong culture of pastoral care, affirmation and inclusion underpins the good provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) within this school community. A proactive, collaborative approach promoted by the school ensures the early identification of pupils with special educational needs and regular, clear communication between teachers, parents and other professionals optimise the benefits for pupils. High quality provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is provided. A special needs assistant provides valuable support to a number of pupils, enabling them to access the curriculum.
- A comprehensive policy has been devised which clearly delineates a staged approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs. While it is evident that a continuum of support is provided for SEN pupils it is necessary to document more clearly all stages of intervention for each pupil in accordance with this plan. Individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning programmes are provided for all pupils in receipt of support.

In some settings planning is of a very good quality. However, in other instances, greater use of diagnostic testing is advocated to identify pupils' specific needs and to set appropriate, measureable targets for their learning.

- Supplementary support is currently provided using a number of models of in-class support and also by withdrawing some pupils for group tuition. High quality teacher-pupil interactions characterised the lessons observed. Consideration should now be given to providing additional one-to-one instruction to certain pupils. It is evident that pupils engage positively in learning activities and benefit significantly from the additional support provided.

# **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 N.S. welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation conducted recently in the school. We are very pleased that the following areas were recognised:

- The very good quality of teaching and learning and the high expectations and achievements of pupils in the school.
- The contribution of the general parent body, parent association and book rental committee.
- The high quality academic and pastoral care provided for pupils by the whole staff of the school.

The Board of Management would like to thank the staff, parents and local community for their continued efforts to provide a well-rounded primary education for the pupils in St. Patrick's N.S.

### **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 enhancement of existing school practices. Plans are already underway to extend the current school Aladdin longitudinal tracking system, to source additional diagnostic testing, to review curricular duties attached to the ISM staff and to further expand our work in oral Irish.



