An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada
Cloncollog, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Uimhir rolla: 19990V

Date of inspection: 17 December 2010

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

This is a translation of the original report which was written in Irish.

1. Introduction

This school operates under the patronage of the Meath diocese. The school provides education through the medium of Irish for boys and girls from junior infants to sixth class. The school was established in 1993 and moved to a fine modern building in Cloncollog in 2003. A principal, eight class teachers and one learning-support teacher are employed in the school. Another learning-support teacher, who is based in another school, works part-time in the Gaelscoil. Three of the class teachers who were in the school at the time of the evaluation began working in the school in September 2010. 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.

2. Summary of findings and recommendations for further development

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

- The principal directs school activities in an orderly, efficient manner.
- The teaching staff in the school is diligent and very competent. Some excellent practice was observed in teaching and learning.
- A commendable variety of teaching methods was observed, including class work and opportunities for pair and group work.
- The board of management fulfils its obligations conscientiously and effectively.
- There is good communication between the school, the parents and the wider community.
- Good work is carried out in the school to foster Irish culture within the community.
- Whole-school planning for organisational issues is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the principal, the deputy principal and the special-duties teachers undertake in-school management as a team.
- It is recommended that the school reviews aspects of its policy and practice in the area of special educational needs.
- It is recommended that whole-school practice in teaching English be agreed and implemented in order to ensure the breadth and continuity of the learning programme.

3. Quality of school management

- The board of management fulfils its statutory duties and operates in accordance with the rules of the Department of Education and Skills.

- The principal is to be commended on the diligent work that she has done since 1993 to foster the growth and development of the school. She ensures that the school operates in an orderly, efficient manner. Meetings of the teaching staff are held on a regular basis. The school has a deputy principal and two special-duties teachers. The principal reviews the duties associated with these posts at the beginning of the school year. The various duties are undertaken competently and effectively. It is recommended that the principal, the deputy principal and the special-duties teachers undertake in-school management as a team. It is recommended that meetings of this team be convened regularly.

- It is recommended that the board of management agree contracts with the deputy principal and the special-duties teachers and that the areas of responsibility be reviewed regularly.

- There is effective communication between the school and parents. Methods of communication include newsletters, the school website and the pupils' homework diaries. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. Written reports on pupil progress and achievement in standardised tests are sent home at the end of the school year.

- The parents' association works diligently to raise funds and contributes significantly to the organisation of extra-curricular activities. It is evident that parents are very satisfied with the provision made by the school for the various aspects of the pupils' development. Officers of the parents' association state that they are pleased in particular with the orderly management of the school, communication with parents, the Irish culture of the school and the fostering of pupils' interpersonal skills.

4. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation

- Appropriate procedures are followed in the development of whole-school policies. The role allocated to parents in this process is to be commended. In general, school policies relating to organisational aspects of the school are very good. These policies are specific to the school context and provide useful guidance to school staff.

- Some of the whole-school policies on curriculum implementation are good. The policies for Irish and Mathematics are very helpful as a guide to teachers, as they are comprehensive, clear and reader-friendly. It is recommended that whole-school practice in teaching English be agreed and implemented in order to ensure the breadth and continuity of the learning programme. It is recommended that the school agree and implement a policy for the development of pupils' computer skills. This policy could be based on the framework available on www.action.ncca.ie

- On the whole, the quality of classroom planning is good. It is recommended that in-school management develop a common approach to planning and recording among individual teachers.

Child protection policy and procedures

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools.* Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the

procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. During the evaluation a high level of competence and professionalism was observed in teachers' work. In particular, the use of a wide variety of teaching methods and resources in the lessons is to be commended.

- Pupils perform very well in standardised attainment tests in Mathematics and English reading. It is recommended that appropriate computer software be used to collate, examine and interpret test results at a whole-school level and at the level of the individual pupil.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good in some classes. A comprehensive action plan has been developed on a school basis. However, it is necessary to ensure that all aspects of the plan are implemented in all classes. New pupils in the school are well able to understand and use Irish by the end of the first term, as a result of the comprehension drills and oral exercises employed. This work is built upon productively in the junior and middle classes so that pupils successfully acquire and enrich their language skills. These language practices could be implemented in every class through strengthening the role of in-school management in policy implementation. Pupils are given a wide experience of reading and writing, involving class work, novels and library work.

- The overall standard of teaching and learning in English is good. There is scope for greater continuity between classes, however, in aspects of the programme. There is a whole-school approach to fostering an interest in reading among the pupils. Very good practice was observed in some classes with regard to vocabulary development. It is recommended that the school improve this work further through the provision of an attractive, well-organised pupils' library in each classroom. It is recommended also that the school agrees, records and implements whole-school approaches to the selection and use of class novels and other authentic reading materials. There are effective whole-school practices in the areas of phonics and handwriting. This is reflected in the high standard of pupils' work. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their writing skills in a range of genres. Their work is displayed attractively.

- In general, the standard of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. The majority of lessons observed in the course of the evaluation were of a high standard. Beneficial use was made of appropriate equipment and illustrative materials to facilitate pupil learning. Pupils participated actively in the different activities, sometimes in pairs or small groups. Appropriate emphasis was placed on mental arithmetic and number facts (tables). Individual teachers were advised on how best to adapt the work to the pupils' ability levels.

- The overall standard of teaching and learning in History is good as is the manner in which local history is skilfully woven into the class programme. Pictures, posters, computer facilities, textbooks, dialogue, project work, discussion, storytelling and drama are all used to promote awareness of historical aspects of life.

6. Quality of supports for pupils

- Two teachers provide support to pupils with special educational needs in the school. Commendable variety was observed in the teaching approaches used. This included work with individual pupils and with groups in the support-teachers' rooms and in the pupils' classrooms. Teachers prepare individual learning plans in which clear learning targets are set out. Short-term planning and the recording of pupil progress are very good in some instances. It is recommended that planning and record keeping for every pupil be set out in a transparent and reader-friendly manner.

- It is recommended that the school organise the work of the support team so that, in so far as is possible, every pupil and class teacher works with one member of the support team. It is recommended that the school agree policies regarding the number of years a teacher will spend in the learning-support post and the continuous professional development to be undertaken by the post holder.

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