An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Gaelscoil Charraig Uí Leighin
Carrigaline, Co. Cork
Roll number: 19881Q

Date of inspection: 12 May 2011

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

Gaelscoil Charraig Uí Leighin was founded in 1985. The school is situated in the town of Carrigaline, about seven miles from Cork city. It is a Catholic, co-educational Gaelscoil, which functions under the patronage of the Bishop of Cork and Ross. The teaching staff comprises the following: the principal, sixteen teachers of mainstream classes and five support/resource teachers. There are 469 pupils enrolled in the school and it is reported that their school-attendance record is at a very good level. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

During the whole school evaluation, the inspector observed teaching and learning in ten classrooms and in three teaching-support locations.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school has an active, effective board of management. The members strongly support the administration and staff of the school and they show an understanding of the quality of the educational provision.
- The principal displays strong leadership qualities. She has a precise, clear vision for the future of the school and she directs the progress of the teaching and learning very capably. She facilitates an open co-operative culture among the staff-members.
- The teaching staff work professionally and diligently for the benefit of the pupils.
- A great effort is made to promote and enrich the Gaelscoil educational ethos throughout the school.
- The quality of whole-school planning is of a high standard. The self-assessment culture is firmly embedded in the work of the school. Continuous review instruments are regularly and well used, to gauge the effectiveness of various practices.
- A great emphasis is placed on school co-curricular areas. Pupil achievements in music, sport and drama are acknowledged and their participation in these activities is supported and celebrated.
- The pupils are well behaved and a welcoming atmosphere, conducive to learning, is fostered in the classrooms.
- The participation and regular input of the parents in various school events is welcomed.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the teaching staff ensure consistency in short-term planning and place extra emphasis on registering the learning targets and objectives.
- A variation was observed in the quality of writing through the school. It is recommended that the standard of written work be improved and that a structured graded approach to the development of the teaching of writing be ensured.

- It is recommended that the requisite language structures and the terminology appropriate to the different curricular subjects be recorded and taken into account in planning and in classroom practice.

3. Quality of School Management

- An effective board of management operates in the school and it is evident that the board-members are committed to the specific orientation of the school. The board strongly supports the school staff and they show an understanding of the quality of the educational provision. The board are commended for the trouble they have taken to provide a high standard of accommodation and resources in the school. Precise minutes of meetings are kept, financial matters are regularly monitored, and a comprehensive report from the principal is regularly presented at the board meetings. School policies are appropriately developed and approved. In the questionnaires distributed, however, the parents indicated uncertainty or disagreement about their knowledge of the work of the board. It is recommended that communication structures be further developed, to provide extra information for parents regarding the proceedings of the board of management.

- The principal displays strong leadership qualities. She has a precise, clear vision for the future of the school and she directs the progress of the teaching and learning very capably. She facilitates an open collaborative culture among the staff members. Appropriate responsibilities are shared with the members of the in-school management team and the fulfilment of a wide range of responsibilities is undertaken with diligence and professionalism. Leadership of curriculum subjects has been well developed and meetings are regularly organised. A self-assessment culture is promoted and instruments of continuous review are used to gauge the effectiveness of various practices.

- The maintenance of the school building is of a very good standard. The physical environment is very well kept and the secretarial provision is very helpful in the effective administration of the school. Pupils' work in various areas of the curriculum is attractively displayed in the public corridors. A wide range of learning aids is available and in some classes good use is made of computer and technological equipment to support the presentation of the lessons.

- Parents' regular participation in various school events is welcomed. An energetic parents' association operates in the school. In the questionnaires distributed, the parents agreed that the Parents' Committee keeps them informed of its work. The parents also reported that the teaching in the school is good, that the teachers treat the pupils fairly and that the school is well esteemed in the community. Arising from answers given in the questionnaires, the school authorities should ensure that parents are invited to express their opinions on school policies.

- The pupils are well behaved and an atmosphere conducive to learning is fostered in the classrooms. The answers given in the questionnaires indicate that the majority of the pupils know the class-rules and school-rules and that they get on well with their peers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- On the whole, the quality of planning and school self-evaluation is of a high standard. A very wide range of policies has been formulated and the hard work invested in developing complete, thorough paperwork in the organisational documentation is acknowledged. A practical action-plan for the year has been provided by the principal to

direct her own work. The school planning documentation for curricular subjects is of a good standard. It is necessary now to ensure that the well-developed whole-school curriculum planning is being implemented in every classroom situation. It is also recommended that the requisite language structures and the terminology to suit the various subjects on the curriculum be recorded and taken into account in classroom planning and practice.

- Every teacher does individual preparation for teaching in the mainstream classes. Structured preparation for the *Meitheal Ranga* (Class Working Party) system and for the individual educational programmes is provided in the support situations. Because of the variety of practice observed regarding the effectiveness of individual planning for the mainstream classes, it is recommended that the teaching staff ensure consistency in short-term planning, with a greater emphasis on laying out learning targets and objectives.

- The self-assessment culture is firmly embedded in the work of the school. Continuous review instruments are regularly and well used, to gauge the effectiveness of various practices. A whole-school analysis of pupil achievements in literacy and numeracy is conducted annually. This good practice is commended.

- The school authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools.* Evidence was also provided 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

- On the whole, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Practice of a very high standard was observed in certain classes. Examples of such practice were collaborative work, activity tasks, handling of concrete material and appropriate assessment methods. It is now recommended that the use of these good practices and methodologies be extended throughout the school. It would be worth ensuring that differentiated strategies are developed and implemented in every classroom, which would serve the specific needs of the individual pupil. The results of the questionnaires indicate that the majority of the pupils feel that things are clearly explained to them during their lessons. The majority of the pupils also intimated that they are doing well in reading and in Mathematics.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish, on the whole, is of a good standard. In the majority of classes, there is a praiseworthy emphasis on communication between pupils and vocabulary-development tasks are effectively devised for them. In certain classes there is an abundance of Irish print on display and it is recommended that this good practice be extended throughout the school. The pupils achieve a creditable standard in oral Irish. Appropriate use is made of various reading schemes and the majority of the pupils read fluently and with an appropriate level of understanding. A start has been made on developing the writing of various kinds of texts at certain class-levels. There is a variation in the quality of written work in Irish throughout the school. It is necessary now to improve the standard of writing in general and to ensure that a structured, graded approach is adopted, in developing a wide range of genres.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. English is well taught in the school with effective oral language activities a regular feature of most lessons. The majority of pupils express their opinions with confidence and competence. In order to ensure the comprehensive development of all pupils' expressive language abilities, it is advised that the breadth of the primary curriculum objectives be addressed in discrete oral language lessons at each class level. The regular use of rhymes and poetry is an integral part of oral language in most classes. A specific phonics programme is competently taught in junior classes. Effective pre-reading exercises are engaged in with a variety of reading texts, including novels, being explored in middle and senior classes. Pupils read confidently and fluently. Standardised tests in English show significant progress has been made in developing pupils' reading skills. Free writing and an integrated language approach to writing features in some classes and the extension of this good practice to all classes is recommended. The samples of free and personal writing completed by pupils during the evaluation ranged from satisfactory to good. These written outcomes indicate that a more structured, systematic approach to the development of the writing genres and the teaching of writing should be adopted and implemented on a whole-school basis.

- In the majority of the classes, the teaching of Mathematics is effectively undertaken. The results of the standardised tests indicate that the pupils are reaching good levels of achievement in numeracy. In the classes where best practice was observed, the pupils were afforded opportunities of handling concrete material and working on a collaborative basis. Good use is made of computer facilities, the language of Mathematics is cleverly presented and progress is regularly recorded. It was observed that work from the *Meitheal Ranga* (Class Working-Party) is applied to aspects of the programme also. When pupils were questioned about various subjects/topics?, it was evident that they had a good grasp of appropriate mathematical concepts. To develop the pupils' higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving and reasoning, it is recommended that extra attention be focused on the development of mental arithmetic.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is well served, in both the whole-school approach and discrete lessons. The school promotes a positive, welcoming and all-embracing atmosphere. The pupils are well-trained in good manners and behaviour. Pupils' self-confidence is admirably nurtured by providing a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. A great variety of methodologies is used and a diverse range of programmes is employed to teach the subject-matter. The results of the questionnaires indicate that the majority of the pupils feel safe in the school and that ways of dealing with bullying are discussed with them. It was also indicated that the pupils are confident about discussing matters that are troubling them, with (the) teachers. The teachers, in partnership with the parents, undertake the training of the pupils in sensitive areas of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision of support is of a very high quality. Support is provided for pupils in a variety of locations and the support teachers work effectively in partnership with the mainstream teachers in the *Meitheal Ranga* system, for the benefit of the pupils. There is a great variety and effectiveness in the support systems and programmes provided, among them being early-intervention and withdrawal strategies, providing for pupils who have learning difficulties and for gifted pupils as well as focusing appropriate attention on pupils who have special educational needs.

- Effective teaching methodologies are employed to develop pupils' reading, numeracy and social skills. It was observed that the provision of support is fully integrated into the work

of the school. Structured preparation for the *Meitheal Ranga* and for the individual education programmes is provided in the support situations. Individual education plans have been drafted in cooperation with members of staff and with input from the parents and regular meetings are organised to discuss the needs and progress of the pupils.

- Appropriate use is made of a wide range of diagnostic tests to assess specific needs and continuous achievement records are kept regarding the progress of all the pupils in the school. The work of the special needs assistants is satisfactorily directed.

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