An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Cheathrú na nGarrdhanta
Tuam, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 17631G

Date of inspection: 12 December 2011

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Scoil Cheathrú na nGarrdhanta (Gardenfield National School) is a co-educational primary school situated in the parish of Tuam, Co. Galway. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. There are six mainstream class teachers and one full-time learning-support and resource teacher. There are 151 pupils enrolled and attendance patterns are very good.

A whole-school evaluation was undertaken in December 2011. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Music. The board of management of the school 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:

- A positive learning atmosphere is fostered in the school.
- The board of management works diligently to improve the facilities in the school.
- A variety of effective teaching methods is used at each class level.
- Teaching and learning in Music and in Irish are of a very high standard.
- Pupils achieve very good standards in Mathematics.
- Handwriting and poetry are taught very effectively at each class level.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school's enrolment policy should be reviewed to ensure that the procedures for enrolment are more clearly set out.
- The provision of supports for pupils should be reviewed, with more detailed individual education plans (IEPs) to be developed for each pupil receiving support.
- More emphasis should be placed on exploring new vocabulary in the teaching of English and Irish reading.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and meets once or twice each term. The board members have been assigned a range of specific roles. Several members of the board have attended training sessions to assist them in managing the school. The management of school's finances is undertaken carefully and the school's accounts are certified annually by an accountant.
- The board of management has recently overseen the completion of an extension which has improved the accommodation and facilities in the school. The board's current

priorities include continuing to develop the facilities available, in particular by overseeing the imminent construction of two further classrooms.

- The principal was appointed in 1996. She is conscientious and diligent in the administration and day-to-day management of the school. The principal has a clear vision for the school, which is to ensure that each pupil is provided with a holistic academic, artistic and spiritual education. She has had much success in implementing this vision. The principal has set purposeful curricular priorities for the future, including placing further emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Towards this end, the principal and deputy principal have instigated a detailed analysis of pupils' standardised test results in reading and Mathematics in order to identify areas for improvement.

- A very good range of educational resources is available in the school. These resources are used effectively to enhance the teaching and learning process. School personnel are deployed appropriately. The work of the school secretary makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.

- The parents' association is very active. Parents are involved in the organisation of a wide variety of school activities, for example supporting the shared reading programme. The results of parents' questionnaires indicate that they are very satisfied with the education provided for their children in the school.

- The management of pupils at each class level is very good. Pupils are very well-behaved. They are very courteous and welcoming to visitors to the school. The self-esteem of pupils is promoted effectively in each classroom. Pupils are articulate and confident in discussing what they have learned. Pupils' questionnaires indicate that they like school and are confident in their own abilities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of the school planning and self-evaluation process is satisfactory. Much very good work has been completed on developing the school plan. A clear and targeted three-year action plan has been devised, outlining areas for further development and review. Curricular plans are available for each curricular area. A good range of administrative policies has been developed and adopted by the board of management.

- The school's enrolment policy needs to be revised to deal effectively with the demand for places in the school. In particular, there is a need to set out the maximum number of pupils that can be enrolled in each school year; the criteria for enrolment, in order of priority; the process for dealing fairly with pupils who have been refused enrolment, including specifying parents' right to appeal a refusal to enrol under Section 29 of the Education Act (1998).

- The quality of individual teachers' planning throughout the school is good overall. Each teacher regularly prepares long-term and short-term schemes of work. A monthly progress record is maintained of the work covered at each class level. There is a need, however, to provide more detailed information on how work is differentiated, in particular for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular

0065/2011 and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement ranges from good to very good. A variety of effective teaching methods is used at each class level to enhance the learning process. Most pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of the work covered in Irish, English, Mathematics and Music. Each teacher regularly monitors and corrects pupils' work. The overall quality of the presentation of this work is highly commendable. In particular, the standard of handwriting is very good throughout the school. Positive feedback is regularly used to encourage and motivate pupils.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith ar an iomlán sa scoil seo. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga. Tá scileanna labhartha inmholta ag na daltaí ag gach leibhéal ranga. Tá aithris filíochta na ndaltaí an-mhaith ar fud na scoile. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta sa chuid is mó de na ranganna an-mhaith. B'fhiú, áfach, níos mó béime a leagan ar fhoclóir nua a phlé, chun an léitheoireacht a chothú níos éifeachtaí, i gcuid bheag de na ranganna. Tá saothar scríofa na ndaltaí, idir scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus chruthaitheach, go maith.

  The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good overall in this school. A positive attitude towards the language is fostered. The pupils at each class level demonstrate commendable oral skills. Pupils' recitation of poetry is very good throughout the school. The standard of reading is most classes is very good. There is a need, however, to place more emphasis on the discussion of new vocabulary, to foster reading more effectively, in a small number of classrooms. Pupils' written work, both functional and creative writing, is good.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Appropriate emphasis is placed on oral-language development. High standards in the recitation, performance and writing of poetry are evident throughout the school. Overall standards in reading are very good. It is recommended, as a means of further improving reading lessons, however, that the discussion and consolidation of new vocabulary be given more attention in most classrooms. The school library and most classroom libraries are very well-stocked. It is clear that most pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. Commendable emphasis is placed on developing pupils' creative writing skills and written work is of a high quality.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. A mathematics-rich environment has been developed in almost all classrooms, although there is a need to further expand this work in a small number of classrooms. The development of pupils' mathematical language, mathematical games, and the use of concrete materials, form an effective part of the well-structured lessons observed at each class level. Pupils are given regular opportunities to solve mathematical problems, often with commendable group work and co-operative learning activities. Almost all pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of the work covered in Mathematics.

- The overall quality of the teaching and learning of Music is very good. There is a very high standard of performance at most class levels. Melodic and percussion instruments are regularly played on their own and as an accompaniment to pupils' singing. It is recommended, however, that song-singing receive more attention as an integral part of the teaching of Music in some classrooms. Effective composition activities and the teaching of musical literacy form part of most lessons. Pupils are given regular

opportunities to listen and respond to Music. Pupils engage enthusiastically with this work.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Many aspects of the support provided for pupils are good. An attractive and stimulating learning environment is being developed in the learning-support and resource classroom. Pupils are given support in English and Mathematics as required. There is a need, however, to review the number of pupils on the learning-support and resource caseload, to ensure that those in most need receive even more focused support.

- A start has been made in providing individual education plans (IEPs) for a small number of pupils receiving support. It is recommended that individual education plans which set out clear priority learning needs and targets be developed for each pupil receiving support.

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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 accepts the report as being a fair and impartial analysis of our school's activities.

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 school's enrolment policy has been revised to deal effectively with the demand for places in the school. In particular: the maximum number of pupils that can be enrolled in the school has been set out; the criteria for enrolment, in order of priority; the process for dealing fairly with pupils who have been refused enrolment, including specifying parents' right to appeal a refusal under Section 29 of the Education Act (1998).

The number of pupils on the Learning Support caseload has been reviewed and those in most need receive more focused support.

IEPs have also been reviewed.

More emphasis has been placed on exploring new vocabulary in the teaching of English and Irish reading and is being focused on going forward.