An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Cholmcille
Blarney Street, Cork
Uimhir rolla: 16680O

Date of inspection: 1 October 2010

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Scoil Cholmcille is a boys' primary school situated on the north side of Cork city. The school is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic bishop of Cork and Ross and under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skills' action plan for educational inclusion, as an Urban Band 1 school. 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:

- The board of management is committed and effective in fulfilling its functions.
- The parents' association is supportive and keenly interested in the operation and development of the school.
- The school is led most effectively by a visionary principal.
- The teachers and staff are diligent and conscientious and are dedicated to the welfare of all pupils.
- The pupils are friendly, courteous and cooperative and eager to demonstrate their learning.
- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in literacy and in numeracy indicates very good progression.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Greater emphasis at whole-school level should be placed on the importance of story and of poetry in the acquisition and enrichment of language in Irish and in English.
- The school should consider broadening the range of early intervention assessments to focus tuition more beneficially in the infant classes.
- It is recommended that the child protection procedures be brought to the attention of all external tutors.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is committed to developing a climate of continuous improvement within the school. The board has a clear understanding of its responsibilities in the management and development of the school. Specific duties have been assigned to members and these are carried out assiduously.
- The school is led most effectively by a committed and visionary principal. He has overseen the development of the school to its current high standards with enthusiasm

and dedication. He has succeeded in creating a positive school climate for staff, pupils and parents. The principal and deputy principal form a most cohesive senior management team. The school has established an effective and inclusive management structure with post-holders encouraged to form teams to carry out specific tasks/duties.

- A conscientious effort is made to ensure that all necessary resources, both personnel and material are appropriately deployed. The ancillary staff comprising secretary, caretaker and cleaner provides a high measure of support and their efforts are greatly appreciated by the principal and staff.

- Parents are routinely kept informed of their children's progress through annual parent-teacher meetings and through end of year reports. Parents are involved in a considerable number of worthy initiatives to support the school. Results from the questionnaire indicate almost all parents agree that communication between the home and the school is good.

- Pupils' achievements and performances are celebrated regularly at assembly in the school hall, an event to which parents are also invited. Effective systems are in place to manage pupils' behaviour. During the whole-school evaluation the pupils were friendly, courteous, cooperative with inspectors and eager to demonstrate their learning. Pupil questionnaire responses indicate most pupils feel good about their school: they feel safe, listened to and treated fairly by teachers. Almost all parents consider that pastoral care issues in the school are effective.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Defined systems have been successfully established to ensure that the whole-school planning process is progressed through the collaborative activity of the principal, staff, board of management and parents.

- A comprehensive range of administrative policies has been formulated to ensure efficient in-school organisation. Useful curricular policies have also been devised and reviewed on a systematic basis. Consideration should now be given to producing curricular plans that are more concise and functional.

- Self-evaluation practices, which are guided by the principal and post holders, are successfully embedded in the school's ongoing review processes. A customised DEIS plan, setting out challenging and realistic targets, has been appropriately devised.

- A variety of practices is evident in teachers' long-term and short-term planning. A greater focus on objective based planning would further enhance teaching and learning. Greater accessibility and clarity of recording is advised in the monthly progress records.

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. It is recommended that the child protection procedures be brought to the attention of all external tutors and a copy be provided to them.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes indicates a very good progression that is commensurate with context, age and ability. Results from questionnaires indicate most pupils are positive concerning their own achievement and in the support they receive from teachers in their learning. Almost all parents agree that standards of teaching are good and that their children are supported in their learning.

- Tá aitheantas ar leith tuillte ag an bhfoireann as an dearcadh dearfach atá á chothú acu i measc na ndaltaí i leith na Gaeilge. Baintear feidhm thairbheach as an nGaeilge mar theanga bhainisteoireachta ranga i gcuid mhaith ranganna. Cothaítear scil na héisteachta go fónta sna bunranganna, ach go háirithe. B'fhiú cur chuige uile-scoile a aontú maidir le feidhm na scéalaíochta agus na filíochta i bhfoghlaim agus i saibhriú na teanga. Léiríonn cuid mhaith daltaí cumas maith tuisceana. Moltar athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar mhúineadh na léitheoireachta agus na scríbhneoireachta chun clár céimnithe a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm.

  Staff is commended for the very positive attitude to Irish that is being fostered among pupils. Productive use is made of incidental Irish during classroom activities. Listening skills are purposefully developed particularly in the junior classes. The importance of story and poetry in the acquisition and enrichment of language should be considered at a whole-school level. Most pupils display a good understanding of the language. The teaching of reading and writing should be reviewed to delineate and implement a structured programme throughout the school.

- In English, pupils' oral language skills are developed conscientiously during reading and writing activities. Pupils' responses to and appreciation of poetry are actively nurtured in some classes. A compilation of suitable poems for all class levels would further promote poetry recitation. Pupils demonstrate a keen interest in reading. Significant improvements in reading standards are testimony to the concerted efforts of staff to advance this area of learning. Staff should consider undertaking station-teaching in a more focused and teacher-directed manner. Pupils are keen to engage in free writing activities and it is evident that frequent exposure to creative and independent writing is impacting positively on pupils' competence and confidence. An examination of copybooks in some classrooms indicated that handwriting requires further attention.

- A comprehensive school plan for Mathematics serves as an informative guide for teaching throughout the school. A variety of early intervention strategies has been introduced to cater for the varying ability levels among pupils. The development of pupils' mathematical language is addressed consistently and the use of concrete material is purposeful. The pupils' understanding of concepts is facilitated through regular linkages with their own environment and with real-life situations. Problem-solving skills are developed methodically through a productive discussion of strategies. Work in copybooks is corrected consistently by teachers. Further consideration could be given to improving standards in presentation. An examination of mathematical scores attained in standardised tests demonstrates that overall, pupils are making very good progress in accordance with age and ability.

- Through the social, personal and health education programme (SPHE) teachers seek to develop a positive sense of self-esteem in pupils and to enhance their social and communication skills. In delivering the programme teachers adopt a variety of useful methodologies. SPHE is successfully integrated with other aspects of the curriculum.

- The school's assessment policy, currently in draft form allows for a range of approaches. The teachers are committed to a regular sharing of information concerning pupils. The school should consider broadening the range of early intervention assessments to detect areas that could benefit from focussed tuition in the infant classes. The results from standardised tests are carefully tabulated and are used to identify those pupils experiencing difficulty and to track their progress from previous assessments.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The cohesive support team for special education needs makes excellent use of the available resources to support and maximise each pupil's learning experiences. The supplementary teaching provided by this team is characterised by a child-centred, participative approach.

- As some pupils are supported by more than one teacher, the skills of the team should be realigned with the objective of ensuring that each pupil receives supplementary support delivered by one individual..

- Pupils' educational needs are identified and progressed through appropriate individual learning programmes. There are effective whole-school strategies in place to ensure co-ordination of the input of support team and class teachers with regard to the programme of work planned for the class group. The agreed template for individual education plans (IEP) could be further developed to include work that supports the stated priority aims. The school is advised to issue a copy of each IEP to the parents of the child concerned. Pupils with additional and special educational needs are making good progress.

- The special needs assistants are diligent and conscientious. They are proactive in supporting pupils as needs arise in classrooms and during yard supervision.

- The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator (HSCL) actively supports and encourages parental involvement in school life. The current programme is most effective in developing a supportive structure between the community and the school.

- The school is in receipt of additional support from the School Completion Programme (SCP). A complementary programme of worthy activities has been devised to support pupils. The pupils in the senior classes are well supported in making the successful transition from primary to post-primary.

- The staff makes a worthy effort to create an inclusive environment for newcomer pupils. The English as an Additional Language (EAL) support teacher enjoys a good rapport with the pupils and they are making good progress in oral language development.

Published June 2011

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 welcomes the very positive report and is very proud of the principal, staff, pupils and parents.

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 whole school community is committed to continuous improvement. The recommendations of the inspection have been implemented.