**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

# Whole School Evaluation
# REPORT

## Scoil Lua Naofa,
## Lorrha, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
## Uimhir rolla: 17608L

**Date of inspection: 21 September 2011**

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

## 1. Introduction

Scoil Lua Naofa, Lorrha is a co-educational school situated in the village of Lorrha. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. There are fifty-two pupils enrolled and the school has three mainstream class teachers. The attendance levels of the majority of pupils are very good.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in September 2011. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama.

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.

## 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 undertakes many aspects of its role in an effective manner
- The in-school management team is successful in creating a positive school climate and the day-to-day management of the school is effective.
- The teachers work cohesively as a team and they approach their work in a dedicated and professional manner.
- The quality of teaching in the majority of settings is good with some very good practice in evidence.
- Overall, good standards are achieved by pupils in English, Gaeilge and Mathematics.
- Significant progress has been made in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as a teaching tool.
- Pupils' behaviour and their engagement in the learning process are excellent.
- A very commendable approach to the teaching of Drama is adopted.
- Pupils indicate high levels of satisfaction, enjoyment and engagement in their education.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management should forge stronger links with parents, the parents' association and with the wider school community
- Whole-school planning processes should receive greater attention from the board of management and parents should be consulted as policies are formulated
- A whole-school approach to classroom planning and planning for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs should be further discussed and agreed.
- The teaching of comprehension strategies and reading skills should be further discussed and pupils' writing should be developed and extended.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management undertakes many aspects of its role effectively and board members are commended for their voluntary contribution to the school. School accounts are certified. The board has overseen the refurbishment and extension of the school building and it provides a wide range of resources, including a range of information and communication technologies, to support teaching and learning. While the board ratifies whole-school policies, there is scope for the board to undertake a more active role in policy development and discussion. The board should also strengthen its links with the parents' association and the wider community and should communicate its work to the school community on a regular basis.

- The work of the school is supported by an active parents' association. Parents indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the education provided to their children.

- The members of the in-school management team are committed to creating a positive school climate. The day-to-day management of the school is effective and teachers with additional responsibilities fulfil their roles effectively and make valuable contributions to leading various initiatives in the school. It is recommended that the principal, together with the other postholders, involve parents in a meaningful way in the education of their children.

- The management of pupils is excellent. Pupils' behaviour and engagement in their learning is a significant strength of this school.

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

- The quality of whole-school planning is good and much work has been achieved by the staff in devising a broad range of commendable whole-school administrative policies. The school's curriculum plans are detailed and the staff engages in ongoing discussion of their implementation at regular staff meetings. It is recommended that the preliminary work completed on formulating a school action plan be further progressed by the board of management, parents and staff. Policies should also be referred to parents as part of the whole-school planning process.

- The school is engaging in informal self-evaluation practices. The teachers are self-evaluating their work and there is informal sharing of this evaluative feedback at staff meetings. This is a positive development and a more formal record of this work should be maintained. The teachers demonstrate commendable commitment to on-going school development and improvement. Further attention should be given to monitoring curriculum implementation, teaching approaches and strategies.

- All teachers devise long-term and short-term plans. In some instances these plans are of a good standard. It is advised that short-term plans take the format of fortnightly plans and that a number of specific objectives with clearly identified content and learning activities be outlined. This practice would assist teachers in focusing on clear learning outcomes which can be evaluated. It is recommended that learning outcomes be differentiated for each class level, thus ensuring progression and continuity.

- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good with good practice in evidence in the majority of lessons observed. A good range of effective teaching approaches and strategies is employed and the teachers are skilful in managing group work and pair work. Greater attention to the differentiated instruction of pupils is recommended in some classes. Teachers are hard working and the classrooms provide well-managed learning environments where pupils' contributions are nurtured. A policy on staff rotation is recommended.

- I rith na meastóireachta, bhí dea-chleachtas i dteagasc na Gaeilge le sonrú i ranganna áirithe. Cuireann na hoidí béim mholta ar cluichí teanga, ar rólglacadh agus ar obair i bpéirí. Sna hardranganna leagtar beim chinnte ar na tréimhsí cumarsáide agus moltar an dea-chleachtas seo a scaipeadh tríd an scoil. Canann na daltaí amhráin agus aithrisíonn siad réimse leathan rann i rang na naíonán. Glacann na daltaí páirt fonnmahr i ndrámaí atá bunaithe ar ábhar na dtéascleabhar sna meánranganna. Tá tuiscint na ndaltaí ar an ábhar atá clúdaithe acu ar chaighdeán maith san hardranganna. Cothaítear scileanna léitheoireachta go cuí agus léann na ndaltaí le tuiscint. Tá cnuasach fíorleabhar ar fáil agus léann na daltaí iad go cruinn. Tá obair scríofa na ndaltaí ar chaighdeán sásúil.

  *During the evaluation, there was good practice in the teaching of Irish in evidence in certain classes. The teachers place commendable emphasis on language games, role taking and pair work. In the senior classes, very good emphasis is placed on the communicative phases of the lessons. The pupils sing songs and recite a broad range of rhymes in the infant classes. The pupils participate enthusiastically in the dramas which are based on the textbook in the middle classes. The pupils' understanding of the content covered is at a good standard in the senior classes. Reading skills are developed appropriate and the pupils read with understanding. A collection of 'real' books is available and the pupils read these accurately. The pupils' written work is of a satisfactory standard.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Stimulating oral language activities such as discussions in pairs and groups are undertaken. In the middle classes the pupils work collaboratively to devise high-quality oral presentations. At all class levels, poetry is explored effectively. Reading receives commendable attention. In some class settings, the teaching of reading focuses on phonics and phoneme segmentation, an approach which needs to be balanced with other strategies such as the language experience approach to reading, modelled reading, familiar reading and differentiated reading programmes for individual pupils. In the junior, middle and senior classes, pupils read a range of parallel readers, textbooks, class novels and library books. Strategies such as paired reading which are facilitated by the learning support teacher and the class teacher are successful in promoting fluency and foster pupils' interest in reading. Pupils are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation and this is commendable practice which should be further developed. It is recommended that the development of pupils' comprehension skills receives further attention. Many pupils achieve good standards in their writing. It is recommended that the more systematic teaching of writing at all class levels be undertaken and that more samples of pupils' writing be displayed in the classrooms.

- The quality of teaching, learning and achievement in Mathematics is good. Well-structured lessons are undertaken with good emphasis placed on mathematical games, concrete materials and ICT to explore mathematical concepts. Good attention is given to mental maths in some classes and the teaching of problem-solving strategies receives commendable emphasis in the senior classes.

- Drama lessons are taught very competently. A good range of strategies and approaches which include pair work, group work, dramatic activity, circle time, story and the use of concrete materials is used very effectively. There is very good emphasis on pupil participation and engagement in the lessons observed. Teachers use the drama contract effectively to focus pupils and to engage them in the range of dramatic activities provided.

## 6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of teaching in the learning support and resource teaching setting is good. The support teachers have established very good relationships with pupils and the lessons organised incorporate activities which are suitable to pupils' learning needs and strengths. The pupils are making progress and benefiting from the supports. It is recommended that the timetable for learning support be reviewed so that pupils with learning difficulties receive daily supports.

- Satisfactory individual plans for pupils are devised. Short-term plans should be devised which outline specific targets for the pupils. Parent-teacher meetings are held to discuss progress and in some instances, very good written reports on pupils' progress are provided. Initiatives such as station teaching (Literacy Lift Off) in infant and junior classes is recommended and the inclusion of more familiar and new reading should form a central component of the early intervention programmes with pupils

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