An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Cholumbáin
Killaconnigan, Ballivor, Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla: 18016O

Date of inspection: 1 May 2014

1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Cholumbáin is a vertical co-educational primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school is located on the outskirts of the village of Ballivor and has an enrolment of 334 pupils. Attendance rates for the majority of the pupils are very good. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in seven mainstream class settings and three support teaching settings. 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 demonstrates a keen interest in teaching and learning, and is commended for the high standard of the school's facilities.
- The work of the principal is of a very high standard. He capably leads the monitoring and implementation of the school plan.
- Members of the in-school management team competently undertake a broad range of duties.
- Pupils' behaviour, observed during the evaluation, was very good and the majority of pupils engage very enthusiastically in their learning.
- Teachers demonstrate high levels of commitment to the school and successfully create attractive and purposeful learning environments.
- An impressive standard of penmanship and presentation is noted across the school, and the consistent use of copybooks is worthy of high praise.
- Teaching and learning in Physical Education is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Discrete lessons for oral language development should be based on specific skills and objectives as documented in the school's oral language programme.
- A whole-school approach to the development of pupils' problem solving abilities and oral reasoning skills in Mathematics is recommended.
- Teachers' planning for differentiation should be further enhanced to include differentiated learning outcomes and tasks for individuals and groups of pupils.
- A school policy on the retention of pupils should be devised in compliance with Circular 32/03.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets frequently and is supportive of the work of the school. Members demonstrate a keen interest in teaching and learning, and the board is commended for the high standard of the school's facilities. Board members expressed the running costs of a large school as an ongoing challenge, because the initial enrolment target expected for the school has not been achieved. While comprehensive accounts are presented at each board meeting, the school's accounts should be audited or certified independently as required under Section 18(1) of the Education Act 1998. A school policy on the retention of pupils should be devised in compliance with Circular 32/03.

- The work of the principal is of a very high standard. He capably leads the monitoring and implementation of the school plan. Integral to his vision for the school is a very strong focus on optimising conditions to facilitate teaching and learning. Members of the in-school management team competently undertake a broad range of duties. The team should meet formally at regular intervals throughout the year to strengthen its role in curriculum leadership. Individual members should set out an annual action plan for the development of their posts.

- The school has amassed a considerable range of suitable teaching and learning resources.

- There is regular communication with parents and the broader school community. Responses to questionnaires issued to some parents during the whole-school evaluation (WSE), indicate, overall, very high levels of parental satisfaction with the work of the school. However, a significant number of parents were unsure or disagreed that the school regularly seeks the views of parents on school matters. Further opportunities should be explored by the school to elicit parental opinions and views. The recent re-instatement of the parents' association is a noteworthy and worthwhile development in this regard.

- High quality pupil behaviour was observed during the evaluation and the majority of pupils participate enthusiastically in their learning. In their responses to questionnaires issued during the WSE, a significant number of pupils surveyed agree that they like school, feel safe in the playground, and get on well with other children. A substantial cohort of pupils, however, expressed a range of concerns about their management. It is recommended that these concerns are explored by the school in a timely manner.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Overall, the quality of whole-school administrative planning is good and contributes to the efficient running of the school. The planned review of whole-school curricular policies should ensure greater guidance for teachers in these policies. Aspects for development within administrative and curriculum planning were discussed at the post-evaluation meeting.

- The school has engaged well with the process of school self-evaluation.

- The school is commended for the development of a whole-school and well-implemented approach to short-term planning and the recording of monthly progress records. All teachers plan consistently, and some good quality curriculum-based outcome-focused planning was noted. It is recommended that all teachers adopt this approach. Planning for differentiation should be further enhanced to include differentiated learning outcomes and tasks for individuals and groups of pupils. A whole-school approach to the devising of teachers' long-term planning is recommended.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good overall, with some highly effective practice noted in a number of the settings observed. Teachers demonstrate high levels of commitment to the school, and successfully create attractive and purposeful learning environments. Very effective explicit whole-class teaching was observed in many settings. However, the development and more consistent use of a broader range of teaching methodologies and differentiated approaches is recommended. A review of teachers' time-tables in some senior classes is also recommended to ensure full compliance with Department Circular 0056/2011 with regard to instruction time for literacy and numeracy. The school is highly commended for the very impressive standard of penmanship, presentation and the consistent use of copybooks across the school.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán. Tá dea-struchtúir le feiscint ar bhformhór na gceachtanna, agus baineann na hoidí úsáid as achmhainní chuí agus modheolaíochtaí ghníomhacha. Freagraíonn na daltaí ceisteanna simplí bunaithe ar na téamaí. Moltar an chaoi gur féidir le roinnt daltaí briathra a úsáid go neamhspléach agus iad féin a chur in iúl go han-cumasach. Chun chabhrú le sealbhú agus saibhreas teanga na ndaltaí, b'fhiú na scileanna teanga a chomhtháthú ar bhealach níos nádúrtha, agus deiseanna sa bhreis a sholáthair do na daltaí na frásaí nua a chleachtadh i súimh réalacha. Léann daltaí áirithe go muiníneach agus le tuiscint mhaith, ach ba chóir scóip na léitheoireachta a leathnú a thuilleadh. Sonraítear dea-shamplaí de scríbhneoireacht chruthaíochta i ranganna áirithe.

- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good overall. The majority of lessons are well structured, and teachers use appropriate resources and active methodologies. Pupils answer simple questions based on the themes. It is praiseworthy the manner in which a number of pupils can use verbs independently and express themselves very competently. To assist with their language acquisition and enrichment, the integration of language skills in a more natural manner and extra opportunities for pupils to practise new phrases together in a more realistic context is recommended. Particular pupils read confidently and with good understanding, however, the scope of the reading should be extended further. Some good samples of creative writing were noted in particular classes.*

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is commendable. Teachers place due attention on the acquisition of early and emergent reading skills. It is noteworthy that a significant number of pupils achieve very high standards in reading across the school. A wider range of reading materials at pupils' instructional level and a whole-school approach to the use of novels should be adopted. A cross-curricular approach to the development of pupils' oral language skills is evident. It is recommended, however, that discrete oral language lessons are based on the development of specific skills and objectives as documented in the school's oral language programme. Within English and across the curriculum, pupils are afforded a very stimulating and interesting writing experience. A whole-school approach to process writing and the incremental teaching of specific writing genres is advised.

- Effective practice is evident in the teaching, learning and achievement of pupils in Mathematics. Many pupils demonstrate very good ability in relation to number operations, and show a suitable understanding of mathematical concepts and language. There has been a steady and measurable improvement in pupils' attainment over a three-year period

with a good number of pupils achieving at a high level. To ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are provided for, the differentiation of learning outcomes and tasks is recommended. To further enhance pupils' learning experiences and attainments in this area, a whole-school approach to the development of problem-solving abilities and attitudes, pupils' oral reasoning competencies and the independent application of these skills is recommended.

- Provision for Physical Education is of a very high standard. Lessons, in most settings, are characterised by good demonstrations of a range of skills. Opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and consolidate these skills effectively. Pupils, in a number of contexts, are enabled to participate in reflective discussion on their activities. A broad and balanced programme is provided and ample opportunities for integration with Music and aspects of cultural life are noted. Pupils successfully participate in a range of extra-curricular sporting activities.

- The quality of assessment approaches is good overall. Many teachers maintain checklists, samples of pupils' work and anecdotal records. Some emerging practice is noted with regard to pupil-self assessment. Further work in this area is advised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Good provision is in place for pupils with additional learning needs. Effective methodologies, targeted teaching and the use of suitable resources are features of this provision. Some effective practice is emerging in relation to in-class support and team-teaching across the school. The clarification of individual teachers' roles within these models will maximise the effectiveness of this support. In reviewing the current provision, consideration should be given to allocating the co-ordination of additional supports to a post-holder.

Published November 2014