An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Iniscealtrach
Mountshannon, County Clare
Uimhir rolla: 18109V

Date of inspection: 15 January 2014

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
INSPECTORATE

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Náisiúnta Iniscealtrach in January 2014. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. 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.

The school is located in Mountshannon, approximately eighteen kilometres from Kilalloe in east Clare. It is a co-educational school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilalloe. The school has an enrolment of sixty-four pupils. Attendance levels for the majority of pupils are very good.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The accommodation and resources in the school are of a very good standard.
- The staff is committed to the provision of a high-quality educational experience for all the pupils in the school.
- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy is good.
- The principal provides good leadership to the school community.
- The management of pupils is very good.
- Parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of school life

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The introduction of a differentiated reading programme in the infant and junior classes should be considered.
- Team-teaching approaches to literacy and numeracy instruction should be implemented throughout the school.
- Ní mór athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar mhúineadh na Gaeilge le cinntiú go dtagann forbairt ar scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí.
  The teaching of Irish should be reviewed to ensure that pupils' reading and writing skills are being developed.
- The board of management should facilitate the engagement of parents in the whole-school planning process.

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Overall, pupil attainment, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, is of a good standard. In the infant and junior classes, *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is being introduced and this facilitates the development of the pupils' oral language skills. Most pupils read with fluency and accuracy. In order to cater for varying ability levels, the school should consider the introduction of a differentiated reading programme in the infant and junior classes. A range of reading materials is explored at middle and senior classes in the school. Pupils' written work is regularly monitored and is of a good standard. A whole-school approach to the teaching of writing is being introduced as part of the school improvement process. Class teachers have planned to engage in continuing professional development to facilitate this approach. The use of a guided reading approach for pupils in middle and senior classes to maintain and improve standards should be considered.

- The quality of learning outcomes and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a high standard. During the evaluation process some very good practice in the teaching of Mathematics was observed. All teachers address the development of mathematical language and mathematical skills. Concrete materials are used effectively to support and consolidate pupils' acquisition of mathematical knowledge, particularly in the infant and junior classes. The introduction of programmes such as *Ready, Set, Go Maths* is recommended in the early years to provide a structured approach to the teaching and learning of key concepts and skills in early number. Whole-school strategies to introduce a differentiated approach to the teaching of Mathematics throughout the school should be developed in collaboration with the learning support teacher.

- Go ginearálta, tá caighdeán sásúil á bhaint amach sa Ghaeilge tríd an scoil. Bunaítear na ceachtanna ar an iomlán ar na téacsleabhair. Moltar breis deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltaí sna ranganna uilig páirt a ghlacadh i gcluichí teanga, i rólghlacadh agus i ndrámaí. Cé go labhrann cuid de na daltaí le líofacht ar ábhair ina gcuireann siad féin suim, ní foláir breis béime a chur ar an tréimhse chumarsáide. Éiríonn le cuid de na daltaí go creidiúnach sa léitheoireacht agus léann siad le brí agus le tuiscint. Tá caighdeán na hoibre scríofa sa Ghaeilge lag ar an iomlán agus moltar anois béim níos treise a chur ar an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach. Moltar freisin béim a chur ar scileanna éisteachta na bpáistí a threisiú, leabhair mhóra a úsáid go háirithe sna bunranganna agus úrscéil oiriúnacha a léamh sna méan agus sna hardranganna.

  The standard of Irish in the school is satisfactory. The lessons are mainly based on the textbooks. It is recommended that the pupils in all classes would have additional opportunities to participate in language games, role-play, and drama. While many of the pupils speak fluently on topics in which they display interest, there is a need to emphasise the communication phase further. Some pupils succeed creditably in their reading and they read with meaning and understanding. Overall the standard of writing in Irish is weak and it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on creative writing. It is also recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the children's listening skills, the use of large format books especially in the infant and junior classes and also the reading of appropriate novels in the middle and senior classes.

- A shared-learning support teacher and part-time resource teacher provide a good range of appropriate supports to pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties. Individual Pupil Learning Profiles (IPLPs) and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) outline the provision made for individuals and groups of pupils with differing abilities. Targets, tasks and activities are based on the assessment data available and the programmes recommended by the relevant professionals are consistently implemented. Most pupils in receipt of support are making good progress in their learning. The support teachers track the progress of individual pupils' systematically and administer appropriate diagnostic tests to assist in the identification of suitable learning targets. It is recommended that the IPLP templates outlined in the *Learning Support Guidelines* be used by all support teachers to plan for pupils' needs.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- Overall the quality of teaching is of a good standard. Teaching in the three mainstream classrooms is characterised by the provision of appropriate planning and preparation. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very regularly in teaching and learning. A range of appropriate teaching strategies are used to motivate the pupils' learning in all classes. Continuing professional development and the sharing of knowledge and skills are features of good practice within the school.

- The quality of teaching provided for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs is good. Teaching is based on the needs, abilities and interests of the children. Support is provided both on a withdrawal basis and through in-class

support. Greater emphasis on team teaching is recommended in the future to support the implementation of appropriate initiatives in literacy and numeracy, particularly in the early years.

3. **Support for pupils' well-being**

- In general, pupils are very effectively managed and the engagement of pupils in all the lessons observed was of a very high quality. Almost all the pupils were on task at all times and pupils with special educational needs were provided with access to the curriculum through a range of relevant learning experiences.

- Pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that they have positive dispositions to the school and learning, and most pupils thought that their teacher explained things clearly and felt they were doing well at Mathematics and reading. The vast majority of children stated that they felt safe in school.

- 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.*

4. **Leadership and Management**

- The board of management provides a high level of support to the school and the chairperson maintains close links with the parents and the school staff.
- The principal provides democratic and participative leadership to the school community. He nurtures collaborative decision-making among the staff and he communicates very effectively with the stakeholders.
- A range of appropriate duties have been delegated to the deputy principal and these encompass curricular, pastoral and organisational duties.
- The parents' association is affiliated to the National Parents' Council (NPC). The parents are very supportive of the school and in general the parent questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school, the quality of education and the care and support provided for their children.
- The board does not report annually on the work of the school. In order to ensure that all members of the school community are informed of the work of the board, it is recommended that an annual report be published. The parents' association should also be provided with opportunities to engage in policy development.

5. **School Self-evaluation**

- The school has embraced the school self- evaluation process enthusiastically. All parents have been surveyed in relation to their children's literacy skills. The school has analysed the outcomes of the pupils' work and have targeted the development of children's writing skills this school year. Clearly focussed targets have been identified and appropriate actions have been initiated to ensure that the desired outcomes will be delivered.
- The school uses a range of assessment strategies and diagnostic instruments to track the progress of individual pupils. Parents are informed in writing of their children's progress in school and parent teacher meetings are held annually. A centralised system for maintaining pupil records should be formalised and implemented throughout the school.

Conclusion

The implementation of the recommendations in this report will enable the school to function at a very high level.

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