An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Abbain
Killeen, Maganey, Co. Laois
Uimhir rolla: 17557U

Date of inspection: 13 February 2013

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Abbain, Killeen is a five-teacher co-educational primary school situated in Maganey, Co Laois. Under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, the school has a Catholic ethos. The school is led by a recently appointed principal. There are four mainstream class teachers and a learning support teacher based in the school. The school has the services of three resource teachers who are each shared with a number of other schools. There are eighty-six pupils from the local rural community enrolled in the school. Enrolment trends are stable and attendance rates are generally high. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 to the ongoing development of the school and undertakes its responsibilities diligently and conscientiously.
- The principal undertakes his duties in leading and managing the school in an efficient and effective manner.
- The teaching staff are committed and work collaboratively and undertake a range of initiatives to bring about school improvement.
- Procedures for communicating with the school community are well developed and enhance the educational provision for pupils.
- Pupils cooperate fully with the school's rules and demonstrate high levels of respect for adults and peers. They participate enthusiastically in curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In order to further contribute to successful learner outcomes, the school should adopt a common approach to planning. This approach should clearly reflect the structure and content of the curriculum and specify learning objectives to be achieved as well as learning activities and strategies.
- To enhance the development of pupils' communication skills in Irish and English, a structured oral language programme that is developmental in nature should be introduced in all classes and implemented throughout the school.
- The school should adopt a whole school approach to the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs which includes a focus on learning targets, teaching approaches and assessment.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and operates in accordance with statutory requirements and departmental guidelines and circulars. The board members are to be commended for the upkeep and maintenance of the school. Meetings are held on a regular basis and financial accounts are well managed. The board plays an active role in the development and review of organisational policies and curriculum plans. To further enhance the work of the board, it is recommended that an agreed report be disseminated to the school community after board meetings through the usual channels.

- The recently appointed principal provides effective leadership to the school in addition to his teaching responsibilities. He avails of relevant professional development opportunities to enhance his leadership skills. In questionnaires, parents report that they believe the school is well run. There is an effective working relationship between the principal and the deputy principal. The deputy principal has a range of duties that are fulfilled efficiently and conscientiously. It is recommended that the duties of post-holders be reviewed on an incremental basis to reflect the evolving needs of the school.

- The teaching staff are committed to the work of the school. Formal staff meetings are held on a regular basis. It is recommended that minutes be maintained as a record of decisions taken. Teachers are deployed in the best interests of pupils. It is recommended that the policy on the allocation of teachers should consider the provision of rotation of roles in order to provide professional development opportunities for all teachers. The special needs assistant and the part-time secretary provide a valuable contribution to the running of the school.

- The quality of communications within the school community is very good. Parents are informed of school developments and the principal attends parents' association meetings. The school uses the newsletter and a text-messaging service to keep parents informed. There is an annual parent-teacher meeting and an end-of-year written report which includes relevant information on pupil's outcomes in standardised tests. Parents report in questionnaires that they feel the school is welcoming towards them.

- Pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The school has a positive atmosphere and classrooms are stimulating learning environments with a range of resources including information and communication technology. Pupils are friendly, well behaved and respectful towards adults and peers. In questionnaires, pupils report that they know the school and class rules and believe it is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school has prepared planning documents for all areas of the curriculum and for the organisation of the school. Through the process of school self-evaluation, aspects of teaching and learning have been prioritised for development and review. All plans are signed on ratification and include a date for review. Planning documents should be incrementally reviewed to reflect the context of the school and curriculum plans should be designed so they can be used to inform teachers' long term planning documents.

- Teachers plan diligently for their work using similar planning templates. In order to further guide the teachers' work in the classroom and to further contribute to successful learning, the school should adopt a common approach to the planning and recording of pupils'

learning progress. The plans should clearly state the learning objectives for each class and should reflect the learning needs of pupils and their prior learning experiences. Monthly progress records should specify learner outcomes.

- 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

- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sásúil. Déantar iarracht mhacánta ard-chaighdeán Gaeilge agus dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga a chothú. I ranganna áirithe, spreagtar na daltaí chun cainte go sciliúil. B'fhiú béim as bhreis a chur ar an gnéith seo den Churaclam tríd an scoil. Cuirtear na ceachtanna i láthair go bríomhar agus úsáidtear raon d'acmhainne chun tacú leis an teagasc. Tá cuid de na ranganna ábalta cnuasach álainn amhráin, rainn agus dánta a aithris. Moltar go ndéanfaí é seo i ngach rang. Ceanglaítear imeachtaí sa léitheoireacht agus sa scríbhneoireacht le hábhar na gceachtanna comhrá. Baineann na daltaí sult agus taitneamh as an bhfoghlaim sna ranganna Gaeilge.

- *The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is adequate. An earnest effort is made to cultivate a high standard of Irish and a positive attitude towards the language. In some classes, the pupils are skilfully encouraged to speak. It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on this aspect of the curriculum throughout the school. Lessons are presented in a lively manner and a range of resources is used to support the teaching. Some classes are able to recite a collection of songs and poems. It is recommended that this be extended to all classes. Events in reading and writing are connected to the content of oral language lessons. Pupils enjoy their learning in Irish lessons.*

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Talk and discussion is used as a methodology to develop pupil's communication skills. It is recommended that the school develop a more structured approach to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills as they progress through the school. Literacy skills are developed through the introduction of phonological awareness in the junior classes and through effective use of the class novel in the middle and senior classes. There is a whole school approach to penmanship which should be implemented more consistently in all classes. There is scope for the writing policy to be reviewed to include guidelines on the presentation of pupils' work. Pupils write in a variety of genres and the school celebrates the outcomes of pupils' creative work.

- The quality of the teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Teachers provide a range of mathematical activities. Mathematical concepts and skills are developed using active learning methodologies including station teaching. Lessons were well paced and well developed and pupils' achievement in mathematics is good. To further enhance pupils' mathematical skills, teachers should place more emphasis on the development of mental mathematics and on the development of the language of mathematics.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Visual Arts is good. Teachers provide a range of experiences to foster pupils' interest and enjoyment of the arts. It is recommended that the content objectives from the curriculum provide the basis for further development of the Visual Arts curriculum in the school and further opportunities be provided to link lesson content to the elements of art.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. There was evidence of a high level of commitment and professionalism from the teachers observed. Teachers demonstrate a range of skills in the implementation of two programmes in the multi-grade context of the school but it is recommended that there be a greater emphasis on planning for differentiated programmes for the different ability groups in each classroom.

- The overall quality of assessment is good. Standardised tests in Mathematics and English are administered annually and results are tracked on a whole school basis. It is recommended that this be further developed in order to track the development of individual pupils' knowledge and skills throughout the school. Other assessment records include samples of pupils' work, curriculum checklists and outcomes of teacher-designed tests. It is recommended that a greater degree of analysis by carried out on the outcomes of assessment tests to further inform the development of differentiated programmes of work in each classroom.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support is provided by four teachers one of whom is based in the school. The learning support and resource teachers prepare detailed programmes of work for all pupils in need of support. The individual education plans (IEPs) are developed in consultation with class teachers, parents and other relevant professionals. The learning targets are based on the outcomes of assessment tests, professional reports, diagnostic tests and teachers' observations. Some pupils are supported by more than one teacher.

- Support is provided on an individual basis and in small group settings. Teachers have initiated a programme of in-class support. There is effective use of early intervention strategies. Individual pupil profiles demonstrate that pupils receiving support are making good progress. It is recommended that the school policy on special educational needs be reviewed to reflect the evolving needs of the school. The work of all support teachers should be informed by the whole school approach.

Published May 2013