An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta na Croise Naofa
Dunfanaghy, County Donegal
Uimhir rolla: 18710H

Date of inspection: 18 October 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta na Croise Naofa is a mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. The forty-three pupils are taught in two multigrade classrooms. School attendance is very good. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS, Rural Band 2), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Science was inspected. The board of management 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 supports the development of the school effectively.
- The principal has initiated very effective school self-evaluation practices and the whole-school focus on the development of literacy is highly commendable
- The teachers work conscientiously and approach teaching in a very creative manner; they are very committed to their pupils and to their own professional development.
- There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils and their peers.
- The outdoor learning environment is excellent and is very supportive of the pupils' learning in Science.
- Pupils experience a commendably broad programme of co-curricular and extracurricular activities.
- The parents' association offers excellent support to the board, teachers and pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar taithí níos leithne léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil sa Ghaeilge. B'fhiú ábhar eile a mhúineadh trí Ghaeilge chun an teanga a shealbhú. *It is recommended that a wider reading experience in Irish be provided and, to help with language acquisition, that consideration should be given to the teaching of another subject through the medium of Irish.*
- The school should facilitate additional opportunities to enrich and extend the learning of higher achieving pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is effective. Members are very committed to school development and to ensuring a happy environment where children are enabled to

reach their full potential. Consideration should be given to the provision of an annual report for parents on the operation of the school. Training for new board members should be accessed through the Catholic Primary School Management Association.

- The teaching staff comprises two mainstream teachers and a shared learning-support teacher. At the time of the evaluation, the school was in a period of transition following the recent permanent appointment of a principal teacher and an assistant classroom teacher. The principal has made a highly commendable start in her role. She has a very clear vision for school improvement and for the development of teaching and learning. The deputy principal contributes very effectively to the successful management of the school. There is a very positive sense of shared responsibility amongst the staff.

- Teachers work diligently and are very committed to their pupils. There is a praiseworthy team spirit among the staff with evidence of effective collaboration and team-teaching approaches. The commitment of teachers to professional development is highly commendable. The school benefits significantly from the work of its secretary and cleaner.

- Resources are managed very effectively. School accommodation is of a high quality. Classrooms provide very attractive, print and number-rich learning environments. Displays of creative work are highly commendable. Play facilities are excellent. Much consideration has been given to developing the school grounds with a view to maximising pupils' learning. There has been significant investment in information and communications technologies (ICT). Additional resources to support Irish reading would be beneficial.

- The management of relationships with the school community is very successful. The parents' association offers excellent support to the board, teachers and pupils. Representatives reported that parents are very satisfied with the quality of education provided and that there are very good opportunities to meet with teachers. Responses to parental questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the school.

- The management of pupils is very good. Responses to the pupils' questionnaires indicate that all children know the school rules and feel safe in school. They agree that their school is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school administrative and curriculum planning is satisfactory overall. As curricular plans are reviewed, they should outline clear expectations with regard to achievement at the different class levels. Recently drafted administrative policies include ratification and review details as appropriate. A web site would be useful to facilitate the dissemination of key policies to the school community.

- Highly effective self-evaluation practices have been established**.** A comprehensive planning diary contains a very clear three-year action plan with appropriate targets and actions for developing literacy. The targets have been informed by the careful analysis of assessment data and evidence garnered from pupils' and parents' questionnaires.

- Classroom planning is very good. Teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons and provide and use a wide range of materials to support learning.

- 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

- Baineann caighdeán maith le múineadh agus le foghlaim na Gaeilge. Tá caighdeán an-mhaith tuisceana ag na daltaí ar an teanga labhartha agus tá stór iontach de dhánta agus amhráin ar eolas acu. Baintear úsáid as modhanna an-chruthaitheacha chun líofacht teanga a mhealladh ó na daltaí sna bunranganna. Moltar go gcuirfí níos mó béime ar chumarsáid sna ceachtanna sna hardranganna. Cé go léann na daltaí go caighdeán sásúil, ba thábhachtach taithí níos leithne léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil. Cláraíonn na daltaí cleachtaí scríbhneoireachta go hordúil. Moltar *Triail Ghaeilge Dhroimchonnrach do Bhunscoileanna Rialta* a úsáid chun dul chun cinn a mheas go caighdeánach. B'fhiú freisin ábhar eile a mhúineadh trí Ghaeilge chun an teanga a shealbhú.

- *Teaching and learning in Irish are of a good standard. The pupils have a very good understanding of the spoken language and they have memorised a wonderful repertoire of poems and songs. Very creative methods are used in the junior classes to develop the pupils' fluency in the language. It is recommended that further emphasis be placed on communication in lessons in the senior classes. While pupils read to a satisfactory standard, it would be important to provide a wider reading experience. Pupils record their written work neatly. It is recommended that the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Primary Schools be used to obtain a standardised measure of progress. To help with language acquisition, consideration should be given to the teaching of another subject through the medium of Irish.*

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Teachers have prioritised literacy as part of their school improvement programme and the work being undertaken in developing comprehension and spelling skills is praiseworthy. In the junior classroom the reading programme is commendably broad and the pupils demonstrate very satisfactory emergent reading skills and an enthusiasm for books. Reading targets should be set to challenge individual pupils' reading habits in the senior classroom. Overall, pupils' writing indicates satisfactory attainment in terms of content and handwriting. Focusing further on vocabulary enrichment will be beneficial.

- Provision for Mathematics is very good. Effective practice observed during the evaluation included active learning experiences for pupils, very good use of concrete materials and the development of problem solving skills. Written work is presented very neatly and pupils' progress is well monitored. Attainment in standardised tests is good with some very high scores in evidence. Teachers have analysed the outcomes of mathematics assessments to inform teaching and address areas of difficulty for individual pupils. This is excellent practice.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is praiseworthy. Features of effective practice include prediction activities, collaborative group work, good talk and discussion opportunities and hands-on experimentation. Pupils investigate habitats and living things, particularly trees, birds and pond life in the immediate school environment. Commendably, the school has obtained four green flags in the *Green Schools*' programme. Pupils demonstrated very satisfactory knowledge of the concepts taught.

- The quality of assessment is highly commendable. Teachers are committed to formative assessment practices. Some very effective strategies are used including target setting,

the sharing and review of learning objectives with pupils and self-assessment folders. Written work is well monitored and good formative feedback is given to pupils.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commendable. Teaching is very creative and some instances of excellent teaching were observed. Going forward additional consideration of the needs of higher achieving pupils is recommended. In questionnaires, the majority of pupils agree that they are doing well at reading and in Mathematics. Increased hands-on use of ICT by pupils is recommended. In questionnaires, all parents agree that teaching is good in the school, that their children are doing well and that work is matched to the children's abilities.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with additional educational needs is very good. The learning-support teacher works very successfully alongside both class teachers in providing very inclusive, effective supports for pupils in literacy and numeracy. Some very effective small group support is also facilitated. Early identification and intervention procedures are working very well.

- The pastoral care of pupils is very good. The school is inclusive in its practices and teachers try very hard to address individual pupils' needs. Considerable emphasis is placed on the successful transition of pupils into the primary school and close links are also established with the local post-primary school in preparation for the transfer of senior pupils. A lunch programme for pupils is in operation funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

- Very effective home-school links are maintained. Regular letters are issued to parents. Parent-teacher meetings are held bi-annually. At the end of each school year, informative written reports are issued to parents summarising their children's progress and attainments.

- Co-curricular and extracurricular activities are highly commendable. Pupils participate very successfully in many national initiatives including the *An Taisce Spring Clean Up* and *Discover Primary Science and Maths.* They partake in the *Waves of Change* cross-border, cross-community project funded by the International Fund for Ireland. There is very good involvement by the pupils in the various seasonal activities organised by the local community.

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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 acknowledges with gratitude the Whole School Evaluation of Scoil Náisiúnta na Croise Naofa. The board commends the professional and courteous manner in which the inspector carried out the evaluation. We welcome her positive and constructive comments throughout all elements of the evaluation. We are very pleased with the acknowledgement by the inspector of the high quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement.

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 board of management, principal and staff are committed to implementing all of the recommendations in the report. Since receiving the report the suggested recommendations have been initiated. The board will issue an annual report on the work of the school. We will introduce standardised testing of Irish. Déanfaimid fíor iarracht Gaeilge mar mheán cumarsáide a fhorbairt agus úsáidfimid í chun corp oideachais a mhúineadh.