An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Sceichín an Rince,
Skeheenarinky, Cahir, Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla: 07358I

Date of inspection: 17 October 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

SN Sceichín an Rince, Cahir, County Tipperary is on the Cork/Tipperary border and under the patronage of the of the Catholic bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school is over 150 years old and was built originally in the 19th century by the local landlord. Some years ago the building was handed over to the local community and is now held in trust for that community. The 41 pupils in the school are taught by two mainstream class teachers and two support teachers, one of whom is based in the school but provides support also in two neighbouring schools and the other is a part-time resource teacher. The school also has dedicated support from a part-time secretary and a part-time caretaker as well as a full-time special needs assistant. The board of management of the school 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 chairperson, principal and board members strive conscientiously to uphold the noteworthy historical school traditions.
- The principal was appointed in 2004 and has worked tirelessly since on behalf of the school.
- There is a strong ethos of cooperation among staff.
- In questionnaire responses, pupils claim to feel happy and safe and parents expressed strong support for the school.
- Over the past eight years, the board has upgraded many features of the building.
- The school is well resourced with educational equipment, including technological resources.
- There is strong support for the school from the community and events organised by the parents' association are very well attended.
- In English, interesting process writing activity and free writing sessions are undertaken in the school and the finished products are of a high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A five year plan for reviewing policies is recommended incorporating the viewpoints of all stakeholders.
- The plan for English would benefit staff more if content for each class was more specific.
- A whole school approach to the monthly report is recommended.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board is properly constituted, convenes regularly and the chairperson visits the school frequently. An annual financial report is submitted to the board and external certification is also sought. All the required policies are in place. The enrolment policy signals that this is a welcoming school and the board is now advised to ensure that the wording of the special needs education policy reflects that welcoming spirit. Policies are communicated to parents by means of a booklet sent to all parents.

- The principal was appointed in 2004 and since then she has worked tirelessly as a teaching principal to uphold the noteworthy historical standing of the school in the community. She leads a school where in questionnaire responses pupils claimed to feel happy and safe and parents expressed strong support for the school. The principal is supported conscientiously by the deputy principal, staff and the board. The in-school management duties have been in place for three years and these duties should be reviewed at least every three years.

- As this is a listed building, over 150 years old, matters around the building are a constant on board meeting agendas. Over the past eight years, the board with the help of the DES has spent considerable sums of money on upgrades to the building. The board's work regarding maintenance is supported by the caretaker. The four teachers and the special-needs assistant work conscientiously to ensure pupils receive a well rounded education. The board has also ensured that the school is well resourced with educational equipment, including technological resources.

- There is strong support for the school from the community and events organised by the parents' association are very well attended. The parents' association meets once a month and a board member attends to ensure good liaison with the board. The principal is informed of the outcomes of the meetings. There are a number of fundraising events organised by the association on an ongoing basis. Parents are happy with the standards achieved in the school and the very good attention received by pupils. Sport is strongly encouraged for boys and girls, something that is very much welcomed by the parents. Girls' Gaelic football is developing in the parish and is encouraged in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Elements of the school plan are discussed by staff regularly. There is a need to set out a five year plan for reviewing policies and establish a structure where all stakeholders have opportunities to make an input into plans. It is understood that the board is the final arbiter with regard to the contents of any plan. Some policies have been devised collaboratively. Parents were consulted with regard to the RSE policy and the Healthy Eating policy was initiated by parents. Copies of relevant policies are disseminated to parents. All policies must be signed and dated by the chairman of the board of management.

- The plans set out for Irish, Mathematics and Geography provide teachers with clear guidance as to content and methodologies. However, the plan for English would benefit staff more if content for each class in poetry, songs, rhymes, novels, spellings, phonics etc. was specified. Each teacher should retain a copy of the school plan to inform classroom planning and to act as an immediate reference point for administrative matters. The content of curriculum policies should be outlined to the board by the principal.

- With regard to school self-evaluation, the school has prepared a three plan for the further development of literacy and numeracy skills among pupils. Certain actions have been decided upon, including the introduction of the *Building Bridges of Understanding* programme over three years and the decision to undertake one reading initiative per year. These are very useful proposals.

- Individual planning by teachers is undertaken conscientiously and input of time and effort is evident. Consequently, classroom teaching is clear and certain. A variety of approaches is in use to prepare the monthly report and all teachers undertake this requirement individually in a considered fashion**.** A more whole-school based approach 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

- Pupils are active, motivated and self-directed in learning. Pupils demonstrate sound understanding of topics. Standardised tests demonstrate that pupils are making good progress in English and good progress in Mathematics.

- Sna naoináin agus bunranganna múintear rainn agus amhráin go beomhar. Múintear an teanga go díreach críochnúil le slua-aithris cabhrach. Baintear dea-úsáid as spreagthaigh shúl chun an teanga múinte a fhorbairt. Sna meánranganna agus sna hardranganna, múintear an teanga go díreach críochnúil chomh maith agus baintear dea-úsáid as drámaíocht chun an teanga múinte a chur i bhfeidhm agus a chur i gcomhthéacs. Tá prionta Gaeilge cabhrach ar taispeáint sna seomraí. Nasctar léitheoireacht go torthúil leis an drámaíocht agus nasctar an scríbhneoireacht leis an teanga múinte go críonna. Scríobhann na daltaí go han-néata ina gcóipleabhair.

- *In the infants and junior classes, rhymes and songs are taught in a lively manner. The language is taught directly and thoroughly with helpful repetition. Good use is made of visual stimuli to expand on the language taught. In middle and senior classes the language is also taught directly and thoroughly and good use is made of drama to reinforce and contextualise the language taught. Irish printed material is displayed helpfully in classrooms. Reading is linked productively to drama and writing is linked wisely to language taught. The pupils write very neatly in their copies.*

- The phonics programme is taught systematically in the infants and junior classes and a variety of approaches is employed consistently to ensure success. Differentiated reading material is employed for first and second classes. This is very good practice. Strategies include teacher reading, choral reading and pupil reading. Libraries are well stocked with a variety of reading schemes. Interesting process writing activity and free writing sessions are undertaken with junior pupils and neat handwriting is encouraged. In middle and senior classes, the pupils write very neatly. Process writing is undertaken regularly where pupils draft and redraft. This process is undertaken for Irish and English. The finished products are of a high standard, especially in terms of presentation. Novels are used and Cahir Library provides sets of novels to the school. Very good group work is employed to aid oral language development. Writing and examining of poetry is undertaken regularly.

- Practical work is undertaken regularly in the infants and junior classes for Mathematics. For Maths Month, trails are undertaken weekly. Differentiated work for infants and junior

classes is in evidence. In the middle and senior classes, independent problem solving approaches are encouraged. Direct teaching is clear**.** It is recommended that teachers now ensure that topics in measures and shape and space incorporate overt teaching of elements of number, thus linking all elements of the programme in Mathematics. Pupils are encouraged to lay out their work neatly and a whole school policy on this would be beneficial.

- Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard for Geography lessons in the infant and junior classes. Lessons incorporate interactive games, drawing maps and pair work. Some activities are differentiated for infants and juniors. In the middle and senior classes, very good group work sessions are organised with groups of pupils working on decision making regarding geographical journey problems. These are well prepared activities with appropriate resources prepared by the teacher. Irish is integrated with this work productively.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Throughout this school support is provided by means of in-class interventions, group withdrawal and one-to-one withdrawal. Support teachers coordinate the development of IEPs and IPLP's involving parents, class teachers and principal in the process. The learning support and resource policy needs to be updated in light of personnel changes over the past few years.

- As part of an early intervention pre-teaching/extension-teaching programme, the resource teacher works with infants to extend work already done by the class teacher. This work is practical and active with an emphasis on extending mathematical language. This intervention is commended. The work with pupils on a one-to-one withdrawal basis incorporates specific programmes. The learning support teacher is based here and supports also in two neighbouring schools. This teacher also works with infants on a group withdrawal basis, reinforcing and extending the phonics programme employed in the class. Good use is made of pupil interests to develop writing skills. This work should be extended to enable pupils to write books about their interests. Interesting reading and comprehension material is chosen for pupils. In this regard, consideration should be given to using some of the *Building Bridges of Understanding* techniques in the support setting.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Response from B.O.M.

- A Whole school approach to the monthly report has been adopted.
- All policies have been signed and dated by the chairperson.
- A five year plan for the review of policies has been formulated.
- The B.O.M. has undertaken to review the Enrolment policy.