An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Threen National School
Castlerea, Co. Roscommon
Uimhir rolla: 10967E

Date of inspection: 4 October 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Threen NS is a small, rural school located seven kilometres from Castlerea, Co. Roscommon. The school building which dates back to 1873 was extended in 1931 and again in 2007. The majority of pupils enrolled are from the local catchment area. Patterns of enrolment have remained steady over the past decade.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of learning and teaching in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Music. 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 board of management is informed and interested and is active in the development of the school's literacy-numeracy strategy.
- The school staff, led by a dedicated principal, is hard-working, diligent and committed.
- The school's planning and self-evaluation process is very good and clearly impacts on teacher planning and classroom practices.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is excellent.
- There is an excellent emphasis on play in the junior classes.
- The quality of observed teaching in English, Mathematics and Music was very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A more robust approach to screening infants should be implemented with a view to developing an early-intervention program.
- Teachers should provide more challenging written tasks for pupils in Irish and English, with less dependence on textbook activities.
- There is a need to review the whole-school approach to learning support to ensure pupils' priority learning needs are addressed.
- The school should place a greater emphasis on the development of pupils' problem-solving skills in Mathematics.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board is properly constituted and holds very regular meetings. Board members are clearly informed, interested and proactive. Minutes of meetings show the regular discussion of curriculum issues, including pupil attainment. The board is active in the development of the school's literacy-numeracy strategy. Such practices are highly commendable. Prudent accounting procedures are in place, including the annual auditing of accounts.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal is dedicated and hard-working with a clear vision for the school. She has established a very friendly, welcoming school atmosphere. The day-to-day running of the school, including the maintenance of school records, is undertaken meticulously. The special-duties teacher has a very wide range of organisational, curricular, leadership and pastoral duties which she executes very effectively with due diligence. There is a need to establish a contract for such a post with regular reviews of the duties.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school has developed the school building and grounds to the highest standard. The development of an infant playground and of a school garden in recent years is highly praiseworthy. The school has invested in a wide range of effective and appropriate resources to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

- The quality of home-school communication is very good. Parents report that the school is very welcoming. They are kept informed of the progress of their child through annual parent teacher meetings and an end-of-year written report. An enrolment pack is given to new parents which contains a selection of the school's main policies and procedures.

- The quality of pupil management is good. Pupils were generally well behaved during the course of the evaluation. Classroom rules should be reviewed on a regular basis with pupils and implemented consistently.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. The school has a tradition of engaging in school review and documenting identified targets in a long-term strategic plan and in an annual planning diary. In recent years, the staff has been making effective use of evidence to establish targets and is focusing on pupil attainment. The school should consider options for involving parents in the planning process.

- The impact of school planning and self-evaluation is clearly evident in teachers' plans. The agreed whole-school approaches documented in the school plan are implemented very effectively across the school.

- The quality of teacher planning is very good. Continuity and progression in short-term plans was noted. Teachers make frequent reference to the content objectives of the curriculum and some very effective differentiated objectives are selected for pupils with different learning needs.

- 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

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good with some very good practices evident in specific curricular areas. Teachers promote pupil participation through enjoyable activities and through the use of appropriate resources. Classroom environments greatly support and enhance pupil learning. It is recommended that more challenging written tasks be presented to pupils across the curriculum, with less dependence on lower-order textbook activities. Teachers should also engage in more regular revision of topics.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá Gaeilge líofa cruinn ag na múinteoirí agus stiúraítear na ceachtanna trí Ghaeilge. Baintear feidhm éifeachtach as cluichí teanga, dánta, amhráin agus drámaíocht. Moltar an cur chuige cumarsáideach a chur chun cinn le béim sa bhreis ar obair bheirte, úsáid abairtí iomlána agus dul siar rialta ar théamaí a bhaineann le saol na ndaltaí. Moltar chomh maith an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheacht a chur chun cinn ar bhonn leanúnach agus tascanna scríbhneoireachta níos dúshlánaí a sholáthair.

  The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Teachers have fluent, accurate Irish and they conduct their lessons through Irish. Effective use is made of language games, poems, songs and drama. It is recommended that the communicative approach be promoted with greater emphasis on pair work, full sentence use and regular revision of topics that relate to pupils' lives. It is further recommended that creative writing be promoted on a regular basis and that more challenging writing tasks be provided.

- The quality of teaching in English is very good. In the junior classes the approach to play is exemplary. Teachers have reviewed their literacy practices in recent years and have introduced a number of initiatives to improve pupil outcomes. This includes a greater emphasis on phonological awareness across the school, a structured approach to spellings, station teaching and the development of the writing process. The school's commitment to the development of literacy is commended. Teachers should also consider delaying formal reading until senior infants in line with the *Primary School Curriculum* and place a greater emphasis on the language experience approach. The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is excellent.

- The quality of teaching in Mathematics, as observed during the course of the evaluation, is very good. The consistent use of an extensive range of concrete, visual and structured materials is evident throughout the school. This assists pupils in the formation and understanding of number and spatial concepts. Station teaching is used very effectively. It is recommended that problem-solving be further developed and extended through the regular revision of specific topics.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Music is very good. There is a very appropriate emphasis on the elements of music. Pupils clearly enjoy musical activities. They sing a wide repertoire of songs and have developed a very good sense of rhythm. Pitch is cultivated very effectively in the senior room through use of the Kodaly method. Music is fruitfully integrated with other subject areas, including literacy. The recording of pupils' singing and tin-whistle playing as a form of self-assessment is commended.

- The quality of assessment is good. Standardised tests in literacy and numeracy are administered annually to all pupils from first class to sixth class. The staff graphs the results of such assessments and tracks the progress of individual pupils. It is recommended that a more robust approach to screening infants be implemented with a view to developing an early-intervention program.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school has one full-time resource teacher and one part-time learning-support teacher. The quality of teaching in these settings is very good. Individual education plans are prepared for each pupil in receipt of support and these identify pupils' priority learning needs. There is a very good emphasis placed on the development of pupils' life skills.

- The school's approach to learning-support provision should be reviewed to ensure a shared understanding of the role of the learning-support teacher. Programs of work for pupils in receipt of support should address pupils' priority learning needs and should display high levels of continuity and progression.

- The school has introduced in-class support as a model of supporting pupils with different learning needs. This is implemented effectively and supports station-teaching approaches in literacy and Mathematics.

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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 BOM of Threen N.S would like to acknowledge the professional and courteous manner in which the inspector carried out the Whole School Evaluation. We are pleased that the report outlined and affirmed many of the positive practices that are in evidence in our school. We welcome the practical advice offered by the inspector.

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

In line with the recommendations made in the report We have introduced more robust screening of infants.
We will review and prioritise the recommended areas of problem solving in Maths and more challenging written tasks in Irish and English.
We will review our school approach to learning support.