

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**SN Cor na Fola
Cornafulla, Co. Roscommon
Uimhir rolla: 01607T**

Date of inspection: 22 February 2013



1. Introduction

SN Cor na Fola is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. It is located in the rural parish of St. Peter's and St. Paul's, in the village of Cornafulla, approximately ten kilometres from Athlone.

There are 299 pupils on the rolls and overall the attendance of pupils is good. The school has grown from a five-teacher school to a sixteen-teacher school over the last twenty years and the school building was extended recently to accommodate this significant increase in enrolment.

The whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama. 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 provides very good leadership to the school.
- The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard.
- The principal and in-school management team attend to their duties effectively.
- The teachers are competent and dedicated to their work.
- The school provides effectively for the holistic education of pupils through their involvement in a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is commendable.
- The support for pupils with learning needs and special educational needs is praiseworthy.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the provision for both learning support and special education be reorganised to maximise the personnel resources within the school.
- It is recommended that the school considers the implementation of programmes such as *Ready, Set, Go Maths*, *Literacy Lift Off* and *First Steps Writing* to improve standards in literacy and numeracy in the school.
- It is recommended that teachers prioritise problem-solving in the teaching of Mathematics.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted properly and, under the guidance of its competent chairperson, provides very good leadership to the school. Board members give generously of their time and various roles are delegated and members undertake responsibilities effectively. The board uses available finances productively and its financial decisions have led to clear improvements in the school environment. Its management of the refurbishment and development of the school building in recent years is commendable. The board should consider issuing an annual report on the operation and work of the school.
- The principal provides effective leadership within the school community. She leads and manages the whole-school planning process. She facilitates and supports the professional development of teachers. The welfare of staff and pupils is her primary concern. She promotes co-curricular and extracurricular activities diligently. The in-school management team consists of the deputy principal, an assistant principal and four post holders. They carry out their duties efficiently. It is recommended that regular assemblies be convened by the principal to recognise the holistic achievement of pupils in a variety of areas.

The secretary, caretaker and special needs assistants make a significant contribution to the efficient organisation of the school.

- The management of school resources is commendable. The recently extended school building is very well maintained. The school grounds are extensive. They consist of ample green areas, two basketball courts, and an infant playground. Interactive whiteboards have been installed in classrooms and are used regularly. The learning environments are well resourced with a wide range of resources to support teaching and learning. The school library is well organised and pupils use this facility frequently. Teachers experience a range of teaching contexts and class levels.

External coaches provide tuition in a range of activities such as athletics, table tennis, soccer and rugby under the direction of the class teachers. Sport is valued by the school community

- The quality of the management of relationships with the parent community is commendable. The response from the questionnaires distributed to parents during the evaluation indicates high levels of satisfaction with the facilities and with discipline within the school. Communication with parents is through regular newsletters and the school website in the main. The recent establishment of a parents' association is a very welcome development.
- The management of pupils is effective. Pupils co-operate with their teachers. The pupils, in their responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, confirm that they are treated fairly by their teachers and that they feel safe in school. The pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of co-curricular activities such as the Active School Flag initiative, the Green-Schools programme and the Discover Primary Science project. They represent their school in various competitions across a variety of curricular areas with success.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. Administrative and organisational policies in a wide range of areas have been devised. Many of these policies have been reviewed methodically in recent times. The code of behaviour and anti-bullying policies need review to bring them into line with *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* issued by the National Educational Welfare Board in 2008. In general, the quality of the curricular policies is good. Modifications are required to some of these curricular policies as noted during the post evaluation meeting. The English and Irish policies need to be augmented to include clear guidance on the teaching of oral language, creative writing and grammar. The further involvement of parents in policy development is recommended.
- The quality of classroom planning is good. It is recommended that all teachers plan for linkage in Mathematics. Some teachers were advised to record provision for differentiation and to be more specific in relation to content and skill development.
- The school staff is engaging with the school self-evaluation process. The results of standardised tests have been analysed and the curricular policy for Mathematics has been reviewed. Work has commenced on implementing strategies to improve problem-solving within the 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*.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was good. Lessons are enhanced through integration and the effective use of the interactive whiteboard. Teachers create a positive, print-rich learning environment and employ a wide range of resources and methodologies in their teaching. It is recommended that collaborative teaching be extended throughout the school. Pupils have started to compile samples of their own work. This is praiseworthy practice.
- Baintear caighdeán maith amach i múineadh na Gaeilge. Úsáidtear rólghlacadh, obair bheirte agus cluichí go héifeachtach sa teagasc. Tá rannta agus amhráin ar eolas ag na daltaí. Tá na daltaí in ann labhairt agus scríobh go leanúnach faoi ábhair oiriúnacha. Múintear an ghramadach agus na briathra ach b'fhiú struchtúr a bheith acu sa scoil do mhúineadh na mbriathra agus na gramadaí go córasach. Moltar modh an aistriúcháin a sheachaint i múineadh na Gaeilge. Moltar chomh maith deis níos rialta a thabhairt do na daltaí dul i ngleic le scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach. B'fhiú raon níos leithne ábhar léitheoireachta a sholáthar agus an scéalaíocht agus an t-úrscéal a fhorbairt tríd an scoil.

Good standards are achieved in the teaching of Irish. Teachers use role-play, pair work and games effectively in teaching. Pupils know poems and songs. Pupils can talk and write on a range of suitable topics. Grammar and verbs are both taught but there needs to be a systematic approach within the school to the teaching of both grammar and the verbs. It is recommended that translation be avoided in the teaching of Irish. It is also recommended that pupils have more regular opportunities to engage in creative writing. It would be worthwhile to provide a wider range of reading materials for pupils and that storytelling and the novel be developed throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is of a good standard. Pupils are exposed to a print-rich environment and to a well-developed school library. Phonics is taught very well. Grammar, poetry, reading skills and spelling are all taught consistently. Both comprehension and fluency need further development. To further extend pupils' attainment in oral language, a systematic whole-school approach to the teaching of specific oral skills and vocabulary at each class level is recommended. The pupils are provided with opportunities to write in a variety of genres. Handwriting requires attention. It is recommended that *Literacy Lift Off* and *First Steps Writing* be implemented in the school to improve standards in both reading and creative writing.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Concepts, tables and the language of Mathematics are all given due emphasis. Pupils use games, concrete materials and information and communications technology in their learning. The recent introduction of the *Maths Recovery* programme and collaborative teaching in some classes is noteworthy. These are improving pupils' learning experiences. It is recommended that the *Aistear* curriculum framework and the *Ready, Set, Go Maths* programme be implemented to further enhance pupils' learning in Mathematics. Pupils are knowledgeable on concepts and number facts. Problem-solving needs development in line with the school's own self-evaluation process.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is very good. The content of the policy is commendable. Pupils engage with enthusiasm in lessons. Drama is integrated very effectively with other subject areas. Teachers employ a range of suitable strategies such as improvisation, mime, circle activities and games in lessons. Resources are used very effectively. Teachers brainstorm topics competently. Concepts are well developed. There is breadth and balance in the programme content.
- Standardised tests are administered in English reading and Mathematics and the results are shared with parents. Teachers maintain an assessment folder and such practice is commendable.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of the teaching and learning for pupils with learning needs and special educational needs (SEN) is commendable. The support teachers are committed to the pupils in their care. Appropriate planning is in place for all pupils. A wide range of resources and games is devised to support pupils' learning. Some resource teachers work collaboratively with external support agencies and implement programmes of work that enhance the pupils' learning. Good work in the development of skills was evident in the lessons observed.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties needs to be reviewed and reorganised to maximise resources for the benefit of the pupils. The provision of in-class support needs to be prioritised. Some support teachers have commenced collaborative teaching in classrooms and this commendable practice needs to be extended across the school. It is also recommended that the support team should support the implementation of the *Aistear* curriculum framework, the *Ready, Set, Go Maths* and *Literacy Lift Off* programmes in collaboration with the class teachers.

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 of Cornafulla National School, Athlone wishes to acknowledge the professionalism, courtesy and the advice of the Inspectors during our recent Whole School Evaluation. We welcome the positivity of the report and the affirmation of the emphasis placed on the holistic education of the child combining good standards of academic achievement with success in the Arts and Sport. We welcome also the affirmation of the school as a centre of learning that is welcoming to children and parents and is well resourced.

The Board also appreciates the recognition by the Inspectors of the effective management of the school by the Board and by the In-School Management Team. Also, the Board appreciates the acknowledgement of the competence and dedication of the teachers and the high level of support given to pupils with educational needs.

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 acknowledges the recommendations of the report. The staff are enthusiastic about implementing new programmes such as Literacy Lift Off, Aistear and Ready Set Go Maths. Since the inspection the Board has already given significant funding to the implementation of the Literacy Lift Off Programme. Three teachers have received training in the Aistear Programme. In accordance with our own self-evaluation research we have targeted oral language and problem solving in Maths as areas we will prioritise in the coming three years.