Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil an Aingil Choimheádaí
Keadue, County Donegal
Uimhir rolla: 04809A

Date of inspection: 24 October 2012
1. Introduction

Scoil an Aingil Choimheádaí is a rural, mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. The school participates in the rural programme for Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS). There are thirty-four pupils enrolled and they are taught in two multigrade classrooms. Their overall attendance is very good. During the whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, 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 works very effectively and is highly committed to the school. The chairperson is a regular visitor and is very supportive of school endeavours.

- The principal displays very effective leadership and management skills. She is very committed to the pupils and to the development of a collaborative culture among staff.

- The principal, in consultation with staff, has established and implements innovative teaching methodologies and exemplary assessment procedures.

- The school is very well resourced and is maintained to the highest standard.

- All teachers work in a very diligent and skilful manner. Planning for and preparation of lessons during the evaluation were very good.

- During the evaluation the management of pupils was highly commendable.

- Teaching and learning in the four subjects evaluated are of high standard.

- The use of information and communications technologies (ICT) during teaching and learning is particularly effective.

- Support for pupils with special and additional needs is very effective.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that, as part of a whole-school approach, there is more effective coordination of the implementation of literacy and numeracy plans.

- The provision of an annual report to parents on the work of the school should be considered.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very effective. Meetings are convened regularly, minutes are maintained and accounts are audited annually. The board is highly commended for its management of the school’s physical resources and for prioritising school development planning. The systematic implementation of a cycle of review, amendment and ratification of all organisational and curricular policies is exemplary. The chairperson is a frequent visitor and is very supportive of school endeavours. The board has recently progressed plans for the development of a web site which it hopes will further enhance the very good home-school links already in existence. The board should continue to monitor the attainment levels and academic standards of pupils as part of their ongoing review of school effectiveness. The provision of an annual report to parents on the work of the school should be considered.

- The in-school management team comprises the principal and deputy principal. The teaching principal is very effective in ensuring that all school organisational and curricular documents are maintained to a very high standard. She has created a very welcoming, nurturing and secure environment for pupils. She manages day-to-day operations in a very effective manner and provides very purposeful leadership to the school community. The deputy principal supports the principal very well and has been very successful in the implementation of her assigned duties. Going forward, it is recommended that certain responsibility for the coordination of a whole-school approach to literacy and numeracy be assigned to the deputy principal. It is also advised that the principal reports to the board regarding the implementation of assigned duties.

- The management of resources is very good. There are three teachers based in the school, two mainstream and one learning support. Another teacher, based elsewhere, provides additional support for seven hours per week. All teachers work in a diligent and skilful manner. A class allocation policy would be beneficial so that teachers have equitable opportunities to avail of both mainstream and support teaching. A full-time special needs assistant provides valuable support to pupils. The school benefits significantly from the support of its caretaker/cleaner and its secretary.

- Very effective use is made of resources. Information and communications technologies (ICT) are used very well to support teaching and learning. Corridor displays celebrate the pupils’ written, creative and environmental work. The school building was refurbished in 2010 and is maintained to a high standard. There are many structured play activities organised for pupils at break-times.

- Home-school links are very effective. For example, text-a-parent is utilised, formal parent-teacher meetings are conducted and end-of-year reports are issued. In their responses to questionnaires, most parents indicated that the school was welcoming and that their children felt safe and are fairly treated there. While all parents give a very high level of support to the school’s activities and events, consideration should be given to the establishment of a parents’ association.

- During the evaluation, the management of pupils was very good. The students’ council is a very worthwhile development. In questionnaires, all pupils agreed that they get on well with others, feel safe and that the teachers talk to them about what to do if someone is being bullied. Responses also highlight the need to increase pupils’ access to computers and group-learning activities. Whilst most pupils indicated that they know how well they are doing in reading, some indicated that they do not know how well they are doing in Mathematics. It would be beneficial to increase the level of self-assessment in Mathematics.
4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and self-evaluation process is very good. The three-year DEIS action plan has been reviewed recently to include new targets as part of the school self-review and improvement plans. To date, there has been very successful progress in meeting the targets that the school has set for itself in English, Mathematics, attendance and parental involvement. New literacy targets identified by the school include improvement in approaches to creative writing and spelling. The three-year numeracy plan is now under review. To promote numeracy, opportunities should be created for teachers to work collaboratively in pursuit of clearly identified targets and timeframes for improvement in supporting the range of pupils’ abilities.

- Teachers’ individual written planning and preparation are of very high standard and include planning for a variety of teaching approaches including whole-class, group and pair-work.

- 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

- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtála na ndaltaí go maith sa Ghaeilge. Úsáideann na hoidí modhanna éifeachtacha agus nuálacha i bhforbairt agus i ndaingniú na foclóra sa teanga. Tá cumais tuisceana, léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí go maith. Baintear úsáid as stráítéisí éifeachtacha le bheim ar leith ar an tréimhse chumarsáide sa bhun roinn chun an chumarsáid ó bhéal a chothú. Moltar an triéimhse chumarsáide a thóir a thuilleadh le linn an teagaisce san ard roinn. Moltar an Traid Ghaeilge Dhroim Chonrach do Bhunscoileanna Rialta (2011) a úsáid don mheasunú.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning and pupils’ achievement is good in Irish. The teachers use effective and innovative approaches in the development and consolidation of vocabulary in the language. The pupils’ abilities in comprehension, reading and writing are good. Effective strategies are used with particular emphasis on the communicative phase in the junior section to promote oral communication. The extended use of the communicative phase during lessons should be considered at the senior section. It is recommended that the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Primary Schools (2011) be used for assessment.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Observed teaching was well structured. Talk and discussion are central components of lessons and oral language is taught well. Most pupils read with fluency according to their ability and overall standardised tests results are very good. Team and station-teaching approaches are implemented to good effect with a focus on the areas that teachers have identified for improvement. Pupils’ outcomes in writing tasks and their handwriting development should be monitored more closely in the senior section. A whole-school approach to the development of writing skills is recommended.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. A broad range of resources is used to support the work. Concepts are consolidated well through frequent revision. Pupils’ knowledge of number facts and written computation is good in
both sections. The work in copybooks is neatly organised and corrected regularly. Standardised test results indicate that most pupils are doing very well overall.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science are effective. The pupils’ skills of working as scientists are well developed through observing, questioning, predicting and recording. Investigative approaches and simple experimentation are well attended. The organisation of a science week, the involvement of parents in the development of an outdoor garden and participation in the Green-Schools programme are worthwhile activities undertaken by the school.

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement across the four subjects inspected is of a high standard. Lessons observed during the evaluation were well structured and purposeful. Most parents, in their responses to questionnaires, indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching in the school.

- Assessment procedures are exceptionally well developed. Diagnostic testing is appropriate and very well documented. Informative and detailed checklists are used to assess pupils’ progress in both sections. A very innovative strategy of assessment for learning is used in the junior section which allows for differentiation and gives the pupils’ ownership of their learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Support for pupils is very effective. There are two teachers with specific responsibility in this area. Pupil-teacher rapport, as observed during the evaluation, was very satisfactory and teaching was well paced and purposeful. An early intervention programme is implemented effectively in the junior section. Going forward, it is recommended that additional in-class interventions be implemented in the senior section.

- Opportunities for pupils to engage in co-curricular and extracurricular activities are very good. The school facilitates many projects including The Roots of Empathy Programme, The Western Seaboard Science Project, Green-Schools and healthy eating initiatives. It also partakes in various local competitions and charity events. The school recently achieved an Active Donegal award which is organised by Donegal Sports Partnership and the Health Service Executive. This work is highly praiseworthy. From time to time the board employs external tutors to support various areas of the curriculum.

- A transition programme for the induction of new pupils and the transfer of senior pupils is in place. A very informative welcome pack is given to new parents with school policies and procedures outlined. The school operates a very cost-friendly book rental scheme for pupils.

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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 and staff of Scoil an Aingil Choimheádaí, An Céideadh wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the DES Inspector for the courteous, constructive and professional manner in which she carried out the Whole School Evaluation. The Board of Management welcomes the positivity of the report and the affirmation of the high quality of teaching and learning in our school.
We are delighted that the WSE report acknowledges the effectiveness and dedication of the Board, the Principal and the staff, the positive behaviour and engagement of our pupils in their learning and the commendable support of our parents.

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 have taken careful note of these recommendations and are in the process of addressing each one of these individually.