An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Aghamore National School
Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 15030Q

Date of inspection: 10 November 2011
1. Introduction

Aghamore NS is a rural co-educational school situated nine kilometres northwest of Ballyhaunis. The Catholic Archbishop of Tuam is the school patron. Currently the school has three mainstream class teachers and seventy three pupils are enrolled. The new school building, which was opened in 2006, is very well maintained and very attractively presented.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Science. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 effective in providing and maintaining very attractive school accommodation and facilities.
- The principal works in a diligent and committed manner and has successfully fostered a culture of teamwork and concern for pupils.
- Members of the in-school management team demonstrate high levels of commitment and enthusiasm for all of their work.
- In Science, very effective teaching was observed and standards of pupil achievement are very high.
- The school has commenced the process of school self-evaluation and commendable progress is being made in this regard.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the school review its policy and practice in the area of special education to ensure that available resources are being used to maximum effect to provide for pupils. The school should explore the supports available to assist them in this.
- Posts of responsibility should be reviewed to ensure that they more closely reflect the current needs of the school.
- The school policy for literacy should be reviewed to ensure that more effective provision is made for emergent readers.
- Moltar níos mó béime a chur ar Ghaeilge labhartha chun an cur chuige cumarsáideach a chur chuin cinn. (Greater emphasis should be placed on oral Irish to develop the communicative approach.)
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is highly committed to the school and has been effective in the provision and maintenance of high quality accommodation and facilities. It has recently engaged in the review of standards of achievement in literacy and numeracy. This good work is highly praised. It is recommended that the board publish and circulate an annual report to inform the wider school community about its work.

- The principal is highly commended for the enthusiastic and professional manner in which she fulfils her duties and for the inspirational leadership she provides for the school. She has succeeded in fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration. A formal system for in-school management has been implemented. It is recommended that the posts of responsibility be reviewed to ensure that they more closely reflect the school’s current needs as is required by Department of Education and Science circular 07/03.

- The quality of the management of resources is good. The school is well resourced and all teaching materials are neatly stored and readily accessible.

- The management of pupils in this school is generally good. In most classes, effective behaviour management strategies were used and pupils were enthusiastic about their learning, co-operative and well behaved. Responses to pupil questionnaires indicate that the majority of pupils are happy at school. It is evident from their responses also that the pupils feel safe there.

- Relationships between parents and teachers are open and welcoming and responses to parental questionnaires indicate that the school is well run. Parental involvement would be enhanced through the provision of more opportunities for parents to contribute their views about school policies.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of school planning is good. The school has engaged in a collaborative planning process that has generated good quality plans specific to the needs of the school. The school should now review its English policy with a view to providing more structured approaches for the emergent reader.

- The school has engaged in the process of analysing standardised test data and reviewing pupils’ academic progress. This good practice is highly commended and shows that the school is very well prepared to put self-evaluation on a more formal footing in accordance with national requirements. The school should now ensure that these data inform teacher planning in ways that will ensure appropriately differentiated programmes of work that are matched to pupils’ learning needs.

- The quality of individual teacher planning is generally good with some very good quality practice observed. There is an urgent need for a complete review of the planning provided for pupils with special educational needs to ensure that appropriate collaborative plans are devised and implemented to meet their different 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 teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good overall. Integration across the curriculum is used very successfully in teaching various topics and pupils have many opportunities to engage in worthwhile activities that promote skill development. During the course of the evaluation, lessons observed were engaging and interesting with very effective methodologies used. Learning tasks in literacy and numeracy should be more closely linked with individual pupil ability.

- Tá gá le forbairt sa cháilíocht múinte, foghlama, agus caighdeáin na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. Tá Gaeilge chuinn líofa ag na hoidí ach ní fhaigheann na daltaí a ndóthain deiseanna chun an teanga a úsáid. Moltar níos mó béime a chur ar dráma, amhráin agus dánta chun a dheimhniú go bhforbraionn na daltaí scileanna teanga agus foclóir riachtanach. Moltar gan tús a chur le léitheoireacht agus scribhneoireacht foirmiúil go rang a dó, mar atá leagtha amach sa *Churaclam Bunscoile 1999*. Moltar níos mó deiseanna a sholáthair do na daltaí scribhneoireacht neamhspleách a dhéanamh.

  *There is some scope for development in the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish. Teachers speak Irish accurately and fluently but pupils are not provided with adequate opportunities to speak Irish. Greater emphasis should be placed on the use of drama, songs and poems to ensure that pupils develop both language skills and core vocabulary. Formal reading and writing in Irish should not begin until second class, as is prescribed in the Primary School Curriculum 1999. Pupils should be given more opportunities to write independently in Irish.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good as is reflected in recent standardised test results. Pupils spoke knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their favourite authors and a good variety of reading material has been provided. The school should review the strategies in place for the development of emergent skills in literacy and provide a more structured approach to phonological awareness. More opportunities for independent writing should be provided throughout the school. A greater focus on poetry should be provided to enhance pupils’ oral language skills.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Some pupils in the senior classes have achieved very high standards of mathematical attainment. Effective strategies such as the manipulation of concrete materials and activity based learning were observed. Regular assessment of pupil achievement in Mathematics is undertaken. This data is analysed and informs teaching. This good practice is highly commended.

- Very good lessons in Science were observed during the evaluation. These involved the clear presentation of concepts and opportunities for pupils to develop skills in working scientifically. There was a worthwhile focus on higher-order thinking skills and problem solving during these lessons. The school has also undertaken very high quality project work that has fostered an integrated approach to the subject. Pupils demonstrated a good grasp of scientific concepts and language.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- This is an inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with special educational needs. Two special education posts (one resource teaching and one learning support) are based in the school. The overall quality of provision in special education varies from poor to good.
• Some good quality individual education plans that were drawn from specialist reports were available for inspection. Such records as were available indicated that these pupils were making suitable progress.

• There is significant scope for development in some approaches to planning, teaching and record keeping. While individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) had been developed for this term, they were not based on the specialist reports that were available. No specific targets or strategies were outlined and no reference was made to parental involvement in supporting their children’s learning. No evidence was provided that IPLPs had been developed in previous years. It is recommended that the school review its policy and practice in the area of special education to ensure that available resources are being used to maximum effect to provide for pupils. The school should explore the supports available to assist them in this.

• The quality of home-school partnership is good. The school’s parent association provides valuable support to the work of the school.

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