

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Náisiúnta Cluain Aodha
Cluain Aodha, Co. An Chláir
Uimhir rolla: 15279I**

Date of inspection: 15 September 2010



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT
OIDEACHAIS | OF EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Cluain Aodha is a four-teacher rural primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. There are 75 pupils enrolled and attendance levels are very high. The school has three class teachers and a learning support/resource teacher who also provides support in a neighbouring school. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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:

- There is evidence of very positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and pupils and among staff, parents, management and the community.
- The teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to the welfare of their pupils.
- The quality of teaching is commendable.
- The school building, resources and facilities are of a very high standard.
- Literacy and numeracy standards are praiseworthy.
- The teaching of Irish is commendable and there is a positive attitude to Irish among the pupils.
- Significant progress has been made in the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a tool for teaching and learning.
- Parents play a very encouraging and supportive role in their children's education.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school should formalise its school self-evaluation procedures and practices. Evidence of performance in key areas needs to be systematically collected and interpreted for the purpose of planning strategically.
- The board of management should review the duties attached to posts of responsibility on a regular basis. These duties should be aligned with the agreed priorities for whole-school development.
- The school should examine the policy on assessment and broaden the range of strategies in use for assessment for learning.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted properly. School accounts are certified and records of the board's activities are recorded accurately. The board provides the resources and conditions necessary for high-quality teaching and learning. It plays an active role in considering and ratifying relevant policies.
- The principal provides high-quality leadership and succeeds admirably in harnessing the goodwill of all the partners in the best interests of the pupils. The post-holders work diligently in the performance of their duties and contribute in a meaningful way to the leadership of the school. In order to further enhance this contribution, duties should be reviewed regularly and include responsibility for curricular priorities.
- School accommodation is of a very fine standard, providing a comfortable and stimulating environment for pupils and staff. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards and the teachers have made significant progress in using new technology.
- Pupils are very well behaved and this behaviour is managed in an affirming and respectful manner by the teachers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged in self-evaluation and action planning for improvement, particularly in Gaeilge, literacy, numeracy and through its involvement with the Health Promoting Schools initiative. Consultation with the partners is a feature of this process and decisions are arrived at in a democratic manner. It is recommended that school self-evaluation practices be further refined to inform development priorities and to provide for the greater enhancement of educational provision.
- Whole-school policies have been developed to guide practice in all curricular areas. There is evidence that these curricular policies impact positively on classroom practice. Selected new methodologies are consistently implemented in all classrooms.
- A common approach to classroom planning and recording of progress has been successfully adopted.

Child protection policy and procedures

School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Tugtar tús áite don taitneamh i dteagasc na Gaeilge. Léiríonn na hoidí cumas maith sa teanga agus grá don teanga. Áirítear modheolaíochtaí éifeachtacha i dteagasc na Gaeilge ar nós agallaimh, stráitéisí teo-ionaid agus cluichí teanga. Gaeilge ar fad a úsáidtear sna ranganna seo agus díritear aird fhóna ar an bhfoghlaim ghníomhach. Baintear úsáid thorthúil as ábhar léirithe, fearas corportha agus dlúthdhioscaí chun cumas éisteachta agus labhartha a fhorbairt. Sroictear caighdeán inmholta sa léitheoireacht agus nótaítear éagsúlacht shásúil sna himeachtaí scríbhneoireachta.

Enjoyment is prioritised in the teaching of Irish. Teachers display good proficiency in the language and a love of the language. Among the effective methodologies employed in the teaching of Irish are pair work, hot-seating and language games. Irish is used exclusively in the classes and activity learning is suitably emphasised. Effective use is made of illustrative material, props and CDs to develop listening and speaking. A commendable standard is achieved in reading and there is suitable variety in the writing activities.

- In English, appropriate emphasis is placed on oral language and pupils express themselves confidently and articulately. Poetry is explored in an imaginative and productive manner. Reading skills are taught effectively and pupils experience a broad range of books through a shared reading programme. The pupils achieve high standards in reading. Writing skills are suitably developed and pupils write in various genres and for different purposes and audiences. A review of the school's handwriting policy is needed to ensure the consistent implementation of a cursive style.
- Overall standards in teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics are good. Teachers make effective use of manipulatives, illustrative materials and talk and discussion to ensure that pupils understand the concepts taught. Mental mathematics is a prominent feature of work in all classes. Further attention should be given to problem-solving on a whole-school basis.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil engagement in SPHE is very good throughout the school. Circle time is used effectively as a key methodology to promote positive behaviour and nurture pupils' self-esteem. Pupils' attitudes to key issues including class and school rules, behaviour, feelings of safety, and interaction with teachers are all very positive.
- Teaching is well paced and well structured and worthwhile efforts are made to present learning opportunities in a lively and engaging manner. Pupils are consistently encouraged and affirmed. Most pupils surveyed feel that their lessons are interesting and all pupils are of the opinion that their teachers explain things clearly in lessons.
- Effective assessment practices are in use in the school. These include teacher observation, monitoring of written work, and teacher-designed and standardised tests. Pupils' progress in standardised tests is tracked appropriately. Parents receive high-quality information about their children's progress. The range of strategies in use for assessment for learning should be developed to facilitate more frequent use of goal setting, provision of feedback, and peer assessment, and to include concept mapping and the use of rubrics.
- The teachers have made significant progress in the effective use of interactive whiteboards. In order to build on such progress, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's *ICT Framework: A structured approach to ICT in Curriculum and*

Assessment (2007) and the accompanying ACTION website should be explored with a view to implementing greater technology integration.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The planning, organisation and delivery of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. A range of tests is used effectively to screen pupils who experience difficulty and to monitor progress on an ongoing basis. All staff members collaborate effectively in determining the nature and levels of support pupils receive.
- The pupils receiving supports are making good progress.
- The hard-working parents' association contributes in a very meaningful way to the life of the school. Its members collaborate effectively with the principal, staff and board of management. The association raises funds, organises social events, provides support for sporting and other activities and has a role in policy development.

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, on its own behalf and on behalf of the staff and school community, thank the inspector for the thorough, professional and courteous manner in which he carried out the recent WSE.

The Board is very pleased with the report and welcomes the recommendations made.

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, working closely with the principal and staff, will facilitate the implementation of the recommendations.