

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Stonehall National School  
Newmarket-On-Fergus  
Co. Clare**

**Uimhir rolla: 15350L**

**Date of inspection: 30 September 2010**



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

## 1. Introduction

Stonehall National School is a co-educational primary school situated between the towns of Newmarket-On-Fergus and Shannon, in County Clare. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. It currently caters for 115 pupils from junior infants to sixth class and has five mainstream class teachers.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in September 2010. 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:

- The school is efficiently managed by the board of management and the in-school management team.
- The quality of school planning is good.
- The quality of many aspects of teaching and learning is good and in some instances it is very good.
- Pupils are very well behaved and in general, they achieve very good standards in their work across the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A review of the duties of the in-school management team should be undertaken in order to facilitate more specific focus on overseeing curriculum implementation and school self-evaluation.
- The school should develop further its self-evaluation practices.
- The school should develop its practice in recording and using assessment data and planning programmes of work for pupils who present with educational needs.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management operates effectively. It ensures that the school building and environs are maintained to a very high standard and that the health and safety of pupils and staff are prioritised. A very good range of facilities and equipment is made available to support teaching and learning. School accounts are certified annually. An active parents' association supports the school.

- A high level of co-operation between the principal and deputy principal is in evidence. They fulfil a range of administrative duties with diligence and under their capable leadership, the day-to-day functioning of the school is well managed.

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

- The quality of school planning is good. A range of comprehensive organisational policies is made available. The circumstances of the school and its pupils have been carefully considered in formulating these policies. Parents are invited to contribute their views and they are afforded easy access to policies.
- The quality of whole-school curricular plans is good. In the case of English, Irish, Mathematics and SPHE good guidance is offered to teachers in relation to the curriculum content and methodologies at each class level.
- All teachers prepare long-term plans, short-term schemes and monthly progress reports (*cuntais mhíosula*). Over the course of this academic year, teachers' have improved their practice in compiling these documents, resulting in a clearer outline of curriculum objectives to be realised. The school should ensure that this good practice is sustained.
- There is some evidence that the school engages in on-going self-evaluation. Teachers correct and review pupils' written work regularly and they identify trends in the data yielded from standardised tests. They engage in informal discussions relating to curriculum implementation and the progress of pupils. It is now timely that this work be developed further.
- The school is advised to formally identify and target aspects of its work which can be improved. Success criteria, against which the effectiveness of teaching and learning in aspects of the curriculum will be measured, should be agreed. Assessment data and teachers' observations of pupils' progress should be analysed and used to support school self-evaluation. It is recommended that the duties of the in-school management team be reviewed to encompass a more specific focus on overseeing curriculum implementation and school self-evaluation.

#### **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**

- Overall, the quality of many aspects of teaching and learning is good, and it is very good in some instances. Very good efforts are made to involve pupils as central contributors to lessons through the use of a range of judiciously chosen methodologies. Particularly good practice is evident at some class levels where the pace and structure of lessons is skilfully adapted, based on teachers' formative assessment of pupils. All classroom

environments are stimulating and supportive. Pupils are very well behaved and they demonstrate interest in their work.

- Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus baineann na daltaí taitneamh as an réimse maith imeachtaí a eagraíonn na múinteoirí. Baineann na múinteoirí úsáid as raon leathan straitéisí chun scileanna éisteachta agus labhartha a fhorbairt agus tá cumas labhartha na ndaltaí le moladh. Ó rang a dó go rang a sé, cothaítear na scileanna léitheoireachta go héifeachtach agus léann na daltaí le tuiscint agus cruinneas. Is léir ó na samplaí scríbhneoireachta a dhéanann na daltaí go neamhspléach go mbaineann siad caighdeán sásúil amach agus go bhfuil foclóir leathan acu. Moltar ceachtanna struchtúrtha scríbhneoireachta a mhúineadh ar bhonn níos leanúnaí chun caighdeán níos airde a bhaint amach sa ghné seo den churaclaim.

*A positive attitude towards Irish is in developed and pupils enjoy the good range of activities organised by teachers. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to develop listening and speaking skills and pupils' speaking skills are praiseworthy. From second class to sixth class, reading skills are effectively developed and pupils read with understanding and accuracy. It is evident from the samples of work undertaken by pupils independently that they achieve a satisfactory standard and have a good range of vocabulary. The teaching of structured writing lessons on an ongoing basis is recommended in order to raise standards in this aspect of the curriculum.*

- English is well taught at all class levels. The quality of teaching in oral language is good. Early reading and writing skills are appropriately developed. Teachers encourage pupils to read independently and pupils explore a good range of literature, including poetry. In senior classes, the teachers work hard to develop pupils' skills in writing through a broad range of interesting activities. There is scope for more challenging work to be undertaken with more able pupils.
- Mathematics is very well taught. A range of resources is used to good effect to demonstrate and consolidate concepts and skills. Pupils are given adequate time to discuss concepts, resulting in well-developed reasoning skills. They demonstrate very positive attitudes towards this curriculum area and in many instances pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good.
- The teaching of SPHE is good. A positive atmosphere permeates the school and in all classes, work in discrete SPHE lessons is underpinned by an inclusive, supportive and encouraging atmosphere. Pupils' views are proactively sought by teachers and they are given very worthwhile opportunities to interact with their peers during carefully organised group and pair-work activities.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The quality of teaching supports provided to pupils with special educational needs is good. Two learning-support/resource teachers provide support by withdrawing individual pupils and groups of pupils from the mainstream classroom. In-class support and team teaching are also used to address pupils' needs and this work is well planned. Early intervention strategies are used in the junior and senior infant room, where the development of pupils' early literacy and mathematical skills is appropriately targeted. In each of the settings, the quality of interaction between the teachers and pupils is of a very high standard.

- In the case of pupils who present with learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom, the school should adopt a more systematic approach to gathering, recording and using both formal and informal assessment data on an ongoing basis. This will be helpful when planning the continuum of support for pupils. In accordance with Departmental Circular 32/03, the school should review its approach to record keeping and programme planning for pupils who, in exceptional circumstances, are retained in the same grade.
- The support teachers use appropriate diagnostic tests to determine the needs of pupils who present with difficulties. Both teachers devise satisfactory programmes of work for individual pupils in the form of individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning profiles (IPLPs). There is evidence of good collaboration with parents when drafting these plans and parents are encouraged to take an active part in activities which support pupils' needs. Teachers maintain detailed daily notes of content covered. The school's practice in supporting pupils would be greatly enhanced by identifying clearer learning targets in IEPs and IPLPs, in order that the progress of pupils can be tracked, monitored and more easily determined.

# **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 Stonehall N.S, 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 she carried out the W.S.E.

The Board of Management is very pleased with the report and welcomes the positive findings and 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.**

- A review of the duties of the in-school management team is currently under way.
- The school continues to develop its policies on the recording and use of assessment data for the benefit of its pupils.