

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Colmcille's Boys' National School
Kells, County Meath
Uimhir rolla: 16722E**

Date of inspection: 7 October 2011



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

1. Introduction

St. Colmcille's Boys' National School, under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath, is situated in the town of Kells, Co. Meath. The school caters for boys from first to sixth class and currently has an enrolment of 270 pupils. Careful monitoring contributes to the positive attendance patterns currently in evidence.

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 quality of curricular and organisational leadership provided by the principal is very good.
- The conscientious staff demonstrates great commitment to optimising pupils' learning experiences.
- The quality of teaching is very high. Learning outcomes in English and Mathematics are particularly praiseworthy
- The board of management works purposefully to support the organisation and development of the school.
- The parents' association actively supports the development of the school.
- Pupils demonstrate commendable behaviour and attitudes within an affirming learning environment.
- School self-evaluation practices and improvement initiatives are very good.
- Exemplary assessment practices are in evidence.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high quality.
- Very effective use is made of information and communications technology (ICT) across all curricular areas.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Chun barr feabhais a bhaint amach i dtorthaí foghlama na ndaltaí i nGaeilge moltar d'fhoireann na scoile forbairt ó rang go rang a chinntiú agus ábhar léitheoireachta a dhifreálú in oiriúint do chumas na ndaltaí. *(To further improve pupils' learning outcomes in Irish staff is advised to ensure progression from class to class and to differentiate reading material in accordance with pupils' abilities)*
- More extensive use of the monthly reports is recommended to further enhance the school self-review process and to support the implementation of a spiral curriculum.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Members work purposefully to ensure the effective management and development of the school. The board is advised to extend the duration of the lunch break to ensure compliance with the *Time in School* circular 11/95. Board members demonstrate considerable insight into curricular initiatives and achievements.
- The quality of organisational and curricular leadership provided by the principal is very good. He facilitates the development of a child-centred, collaborative, affirming learning community in a very effective manner. His promotion of innovative and purposeful educational initiatives is highly commendable. The principal works closely with the deputy principal who provides valuable organisational and curricular leadership within the school. Two post-holders fulfil a balanced remit of duties with great diligence and effectiveness.
- A key characteristic of the school is the strong sense of teamwork and commitment to optimising learning experiences for all pupils. A supportive staff mentoring programme has been successfully established. Ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.
- An extensive range of resources is used productively to support teaching and learning. Very effective use is made of ICT across all curricular areas. The school facilities and grounds have been maintained and upgraded in an appropriate manner.
- The management of pupils is very good with teachers reporting positively about the benefits of the long established *Discipline for Learning* programme. Pupils' behaviour and engagement in their learning was exemplary during the period of the evaluation. Analysis of pupil questionnaires, distributed during the evaluation, indicate great positivity with regard to various aspects of school life.
- Positive relationships have been cultivated between the board, the staff and the parent community. Parent representatives attest to the high quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision and to the school's welcoming ethos. The long-established parents' association makes a significant contribution to the school's development which includes helpful courses for parents. Questionnaires administered to parents during the evaluation indicate that they are very satisfied with the work of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school self-evaluation process is very good. It is deeply embedded in the culture and practices of this school and is reflected in a range of successful initiatives which have impacted positively on teaching and learning. Systematic analysis of assessment data together with regular discourse involving all stakeholders ensures a collaborative, evidence-based developmental process.
- The quality of school planning is good. An extensive range of clear organisational policies contribute to the efficient management of the school. Curricular policies support the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum with due regard for priorities identified by staff.

- The overall quality of teachers' short and long term planning is good. Monthly progress reports should be further utilised to inform the school review process and support the implementation of a spiral curriculum.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge sasúil ar an iomlán. Usáidtear raon breá de mhodhanna múinte spreagúla agus is iomaí iarracht a dhéantar chun cumas cainte na ndaltaí a fhorbairt le cabhair na nua-teicneolaíochta. Léiríonn na daltaí cumas áirithe maidir le abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur. Chun barr feabhais a bhaint amach, afách, níor mhiste d'fhoireann na scoil leanúnachas ó rang go rang a shoiléiriú agus a neartú. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go hoiriúnach agus is inmholta mar a aithrisíonn na daltaí réimse cuí de dhánta agus d'amhráin le cruinneas. Moltar don fhoireann difreáil a dhéanamh maidir leis an ábhar léitheoireachta chun scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. B'fhiú tuilleadh béime a leagan ar an saor-scribhneoireacht.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory overall. A good range of stimulating teaching methodologies is used and many efforts are made to develop pupils' speaking skills with the help of ICT. Pupils demonstrate a certain ability to compose simple sentences and ask questions. However, in the interest of further improvement the school staff needs to clarify and strengthen progression from class to class. Listening skills are suitably developed and it is praiseworthy that pupils recite poems and songs with accuracy. It is recommended that differentiated reading material be provided to develop reading skills. Further emphasis should be placed on the development of free writing.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. The school is highly commended for its approach to literacy and the successful implementation of an individualised reading programme for each pupil. Class libraries are well stocked and positive attitudes to reading for pleasure are nurtured. Suitable approaches are used successfully in middle and senior classes to class novels. Consideration should now be given to extending the range of novels in some classrooms and to the sharing of best practices in this regard. Oral language skills are suitably developed with some very good practice noted regarding the enhancement of pupils' competencies through poetry. Writing skills are developed purposefully across all classes. The school-designed spelling programme impacts positively on pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Well-structured lessons reflect a whole-school emphasis on the consistent development of mathematical language. Pupils demonstrate a confident mastery of key mathematical concepts and procedures commensurate with their abilities. They apply mathematical skills with relative ease within a range of contexts. Consideration should be given to promoting parental involvement in school-based initiatives, such as *Maths for Fun*, to further improve numeracy.

- Some very good lessons were noted in Visual Arts during the evaluation. Pupils are enabled to express themselves imaginatively and confidently using a broad range of media. Many pupils demonstrate appropriate competence and enjoyment in discussing responses to their own work and that of well-chosen famous artists. Consideration should be given at whole-school level to identifying and systematically extending a broader range of visual vocabulary to further enhance pupils' levels of response.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers demonstrate high expectations for pupils' achievements. They employ a suitable range of methodologies and resources to provide stimulating learning experiences for pupils who demonstrate positive learning outcomes. A range of formative assessment strategies is used very effectively throughout the school to maximise pupils' learning. The successful whole-school promotion of pupil self-assessment practices is laudable. The presentation of pupils' written work is admirable and constructive feedback is given regularly.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The cohesive co-ordination of support for pupils with special education needs is highly commendable. Regular collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers ensure a close alignment in provision for pupils. Succinct learning programmes and individual education plans have been devised by teachers in consultation with parents to support pupils' learning. The support team are commended for the ongoing analysis of assessment data at whole-school and individual pupil level to inform the design and review of programmes.
- Lessons are well structured and teachers employ a suitable range of methodologies and resources to address pupils' prioritised needs in an effective and affirming manner. A range of purposeful in-class support models has been successfully established to ensure focused intervention in mainstream settings for pupils with special educational needs.
- Appropriate support is provided for pupils for whom English is an additional language through the differentiation of mainstream programmes and the provision of supplementary tuition by the learning support teacher for a small number of pupils.

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