

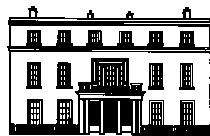
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Colmcille's NS  
Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny  
Roll No. : 17073V**

**Date of inspection: 30 April 2013**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Colmcille's is a co-educational national school serving the parish of Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Ossory. The number of pupils attending the school has grown and additional classroom accommodation has been provided over recent years. The attendance of the 148 pupils is generally good. A welcoming and inclusive school environment is in evidence. 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:

- St Colmcille's school is characterised by a strong sense of community, inclusiveness and the positive, respectful interactions between the education partners are commended.
- The commitment of the Board of Management to the ongoing development of the school is praised.
- The principal leads and manages the school in an inclusive, positive and effective manner and a collaborative team approach is promoted.
- Good quality teaching, learning and pupil achievement is in evidence across the school and pupils with learning difficulties are provided for in a highly competent manner. The pupils are commended for their excellent behaviour and their interest in learning.
- The parents of the pupils actively support the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Building on the valuable whole-school planning undertaken to date in a number of curriculum areas, strategies to strengthen the links to classroom planning and practice should be developed.
- To enhance the pupils' learning experiences, the use of co-operative learning approaches in classrooms should be extended.
- The school's current assessment practices should be augmented to provide for greater use of assessment for learning approaches.

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is properly constituted and comprises active and committed members with a range of experience. The board is conscientious in carrying out its functions and duties, including the management of school finances and the maintenance and improvement of the school environment and accommodation. Due attention is also given by the board to the development and ratification of school policies. To build on established practices and in the light of the changing school context, consideration should be given to the creation of a plan for the school's development over the next number of years. The board of management and its commitment to the ongoing development of the school is praised.
- The principal leads and manages the school in a positive and effective manner. She successfully promotes a beneficial school climate and collaborative working relationships. The principal is ably supported by the deputy principal and staff team, who contribute to the efficient operation of the school. While in-school management duties have been allocated, these should be reviewed annually in the light of changing school priorities. In the questionnaire responses, almost all parents indicated that they were happy with the school.
- The six classroom teachers, including the principal, work conscientiously and effectively to promote the pupils' learning and development. The two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher providing support for pupils with special educational needs work in a highly committed and effective manner. Special needs assistant (SNA) support in relation to the care needs of a number of the pupils is provided in a highly competent manner.
- Relationships with the school community are very good. The parents' association and parent body generally are supportive of the work of the school and engage in a range of activities including fundraising. Parents indicated that they feel welcome in the school. Consideration should now be given to extending the range of parental involvement in the life of the school, through, for example, involvement in selected relevant curriculum areas or activities.
- The school buildings, grounds and general environment are maintained to a high standard. A number of the classrooms in the older section of the school are of limited size. The school has acquired a wide range of resources and these are used effectively to support the pupils' learning. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard (IWB) technology in classrooms. In the questionnaires, the majority of parents reported that facilities were good and that a safe environment is provided for their child. While extensive use is made of the IWB as a teaching resource, opportunities should be provided to facilitate greater use of technology by the pupils in the classrooms. The good administration of the school is supported by an effective school secretary.
- The management of pupils is very good. An atmosphere of mutual respect is cultivated and the pupils are commended for their excellent behaviour and interest in learning. The high quality of relationships between the pupils, their levels of interest and feelings of safety in school are reflected in the positive responses in the pupils' questionnaires. Following the school's successful involvement in the *Green Schools* programme, consideration should now be given to the establishment of a pupils' council.

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

- Comprehensive whole-school plans have been prepared for the curriculum areas of Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Music. These provide clear guidance for classroom practice. There is a need, however, to strengthen the links between these very useful whole-school planning documents and classroom planning and practice in some areas. To facilitate this process, consideration should be given to developing an agreed school template for classroom planning, linked to the well-constructed whole-school policies that have already been devised.
- 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

- Good quality teaching, learning and pupil achievement is in evidence across the school. A positive and well-organised learning environment has been created and high expectations of the pupils are communicated clearly. Most pupils indicated that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Parents also indicated that teaching was good and that their child is doing well in school. While group and collaborative learning approaches are employed in some lessons, opportunities for pupil participation and cooperative group activities and discovery learning should be extended and employed more widely across the school.
- The teachers employ a number of assessment approaches in monitoring the pupils' achievement and the results of standardised tests are used to track progress. The pupils' questionnaires confirm that homework is regularly corrected and that guidance is given to pupils on how to improve their work. It is recommended, however, that existing assessment practices be extended to include greater use of assessment for learning and pupil self-assessment strategies in classrooms.
- Ar an iomlán tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith agus tá dea-chleachtais le feiceáil i ranganna. Baineann na hoidí úsáid as raon stráitéisí agus acmhainní oiriúnacha chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt agus ábhar na gceachtanna a léiriú. Tá stórfhocal leathan ar eolas ag formhór na ndaltaí. Tá sé ar chumas formhór na ndaltaí a leabhair a léamh agus léiríonn siad tuiscint ar ábhar na léitheoireachta. Scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil is mó a chleachtar agus sonraítear roinnt samplaí maithe de scríbhneoireacht phearsanta.
- *Overall, the standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good, and good practices were observed in classrooms. Teachers use an appropriate range of strategies and resources to encourage the pupils' interest and to illustrate lesson content. The majority of pupils have acquired range of vocabulary. Most pupils can read their books and demonstrate an understanding of the reading material. Functional writing is primarily practised and some good examples of pupils' personal writing are in evidence.*
- Good whole-school policy in relation to English and good quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement were evident in English. The majority of pupils displayed the ability to contribute to a variety of topics in classroom discussions. The use of structured phonics programmes, reading programmes, class novels and *station teaching* approaches are in evidence and working beneficially. A number of useful programmes, for example, *Building Bridges*, are also being successfully implemented. The recently introduced *Aistear* programme is employed productively in the infants' classroom. Most pupils report that they are doing well at reading and good standards were observed in classrooms.

Pupils are encouraged to write in a range of genres and for a variety of purposes and audiences. While good use is made of the IWB in English, there is scope for greater use of ICT by pupils themselves, for example, in undertaking process and creative writing, editing and sharing their work and in engaging cross-curricular projects.

- A useful whole-school policy has been developed for Mathematics. A variety of approaches are employed in classrooms involving pupil participation in whole-class teaching, group work and pair work. A useful array of resources is available to support learning, including visual materials and ICT in classrooms. Due attention to the use of mathematical language was in evidence. In the pupil questionnaires, the majority of pupils reported that they are doing well in Mathematics. In implementing whole-school policy in classrooms, it is recommended that opportunities to extend the use of collaborative and constructivist approaches be strengthened.
- Good whole-school policy and practice were evident in the teaching of Music. The programme and activities in Music are linked to other curriculum areas and are employed successfully in enhancing special events and seasonal and religious occasions. Pupils enjoy a range of experience across the Music curriculum strands of listening and responding, performing, and composing. The whole-school planning provides for progression from class to class. The lessons observed included enthusiastic singing, listening and responding, composition and the development of music literacy skills, which the pupils enjoyed. In light of the interest in Music among the pupils and the range of skills of the staff, consideration could be given to the wider promotion of the use of musical instruments or the development of a small school choir.

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

- A highly committed and effective approach was in evidence in providing support for pupils with high and low incidence special educational needs. A number of policies relating to learning support and special education provision have been developed. Teachers plan systematically in catering for the individual pupils' needs. A suitable range of learning targets are set out in the pupils' IEPs and IPLPs, and very good practice in providing support was observed in the classroom and resource settings. Good co-operation among staff is undertaken in relation to the overall provision of support and that provided for individual pupils. A useful range of resources has been acquired and these are used effectively in working with the pupils.

# **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, together with the staff of St. Colmcille's would like to acknowledge the courtesy and professionalism of the Department of Education and Skills inspectors during the Whole School Evaluation. We thank the inspectors for the manner in which they interacted with the whole school community.

The Board of Management was pleased to note that the report recognised the quality of teaching and learning in our school, the positive relationships and shared goals of the management, staff, parents and pupils of our school.

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the school for their hard work and commitment in striving to provide high quality learning opportunities to our pupils.

#### **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 recommendations in the report are being implemented and will be phased in on a continuous basis. We intend to use the report's recommendations as part of our on-going system of self-evaluation and improvement.