

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Light of Christ School,
Dunmore East, County Waterford
Uimhir rolla: 17525H

Date of inspection: 25 November 2010



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

1. Introduction

Light of Christ School is a five-teacher, all-girls' school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are 119 pupils enrolled and attendance rates are good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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 very committed to the development of the school and the welfare of the pupils.
- The principal inspires a shared sense of purpose among the staff and values their contribution in the overall development of the school.
- The management of pupils is very effective and the pupils are very courteous and welcoming.
- The staff of the school is very caring and dedicated, and are committed to supporting their pupils.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the school is very good.
- Some pupils have achieved very good standards in literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management is advised to enlist the services of a mediator to work through the current communication difficulties that exist between the board, the parents' association and the staff of the school.
- Procedures should be identified and developed through which parents can be facilitated to play a more active role in the consultation process as part of policy development and to ensure that they are made more aware of the many positive aspects of the work of the school.
- The future review of curricular plans should focus on the further development of whole-school approaches to various subject areas to ensure the more consistent delivery of all aspects the curriculum, and the pace of review for development should be monitored appropriately.
- The use of supplementary readers and real books in both Irish and English should be expanded upon throughout the school to help to further develop the pupils' reading skills, and a greater emphasis should be placed on creative writing development in both languages.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school and members carry out their duties conscientiously. The board is advised to enlist the services of a mediator to work through the current communication difficulties that exist between the board, the parents' association and the staff of the school. While each endeavour to work on behalf of the pupils in the school, misunderstandings have hindered the effectiveness of this work.
- The principal inspires a shared sense of purpose among the staff and values their contribution in the overall development of the school. She is ably supported by the deputy principal and the special-duties post holder. While assigned duties are in line with Circular 09/05, the ongoing review of curricular duties is advised to ensure that they reflect evolving school priorities. Regular formal meetings of the in-school management should be convened.
- An appropriate range of teaching and learning resources is provided and is used appropriately in the classrooms. All teachers create suitable learning environments in their classrooms.
- The staff is very caring and dedicated to supporting the pupils. Parents are kept informed about school activities and events through the regular communication of letters and newsletters between home and school. However, the responses to the parent questionnaires suggest that there is scope for the further development of relationships and communication with the school community. It is therefore recommended that procedures are identified which enable parents to become more aware of the many positive aspects of the work of the school, and through which information can be communicated effectively to them.
- The school has an enthusiastic parents' association and their contribution towards the provision of important resources to support teaching and learning is commended.
- The pupils in the school are very courteous and welcoming. Management of pupils is very effective. According to the pupils' questionnaires, the majority of pupils feel safe in the school and know the school and class rules. Membership of the *Green Schools/Students Council* committee gives pupils a voice regarding some aspects of school life.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The staff is commended for its hard work in developing the school plan. The future review of curricular plans should focus on the further development of whole-school approaches to various subject areas to ensure the more consistent delivery of all aspects the curriculum. The pace of review for development should be monitored appropriately. Parents should be encouraged to play a more active role in the consultation process as part of policy development.
- All teachers plan for their work using a common template. Further thought should be given to planning for differentiation to meet the needs of all pupils in the class.

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

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. During the evaluation, teachers used an effective blend of suitable methodologies to engage pupils in their learning. ICT is used to good effect. The use of a large number of workbooks in some classes should be reviewed with consideration given to their benefits for learning and the need for differentiation of tasks for some pupils. A consistent approach to presentation skills in copybooks should be developed throughout the school.
- Tá múineadh na Gaeilge sásúil sa scoil. Tríd is tríd, bíonn cur chuige oiriúnach ag na hoidí ó thaobh rannpháirtíochta de agus suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Leagtar béim don fhorhmór ar straitéisí agus modhanna teagaisc éifeachtachta i rith na ceachtanna. Moltar anois a chinntiú go bhfuil an dea-chleachtas leanúnach sa scoil agus go bhfuil clár forbartha, oiriúnach cainte á chur i bhfeidhm. Léann formhór de na daltaí go muiníneach as an dtéacsleabhar. Moltar ábhair léitheoireachta breise agus fíor leabhair Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil agus a úsáid sna ranganna éagsúla. Ba chóir a thuilleadh béime a leagadh ar fhorbairt phróiseas na scríbhneoireachta tríd an scoil, chomh maith le scríbhneoireacht phearsanta.

The teaching of Irish in the school is satisfactory. Generally the teachers adopt a suitable approach to pupil participation and encouragement. The majority of teachers emphasise effective strategies and methodologies during lessons. The school is now advised to ensure that this approach is continuous throughout the school and that a suitable developmental oral programme is implemented. The majority of pupils read confidently from the textbook. Additional reading material and real books in Irish should be made available in the various classrooms. Extra attention should be given to the development of the writing process throughout the school as well as personal writing.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral language is developed purposefully in most classrooms and the pupils are confident communicators. Reading skills are developed appropriately and a range of activities is employed to encourage the use of well-stocked class libraries. The reading scheme should be substituted more consistently in infant to middle classes by the use of supplementary readers to help to develop further the pupils' reading skills and fluency at their own level. In all classrooms, the pupils have opportunities to write in various genres. The further development of the writing process along with a greater emphasis on creative writing in some classrooms will help to improve this area further.
- Overall, pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The teachers use an effective blend of active methodologies and these are augmented well with the use of appropriate manipulatives. Number games are used effectively in some classrooms. The areas of problem solving and mental mathematics should be reviewed and developed to ensure the full implementation of the mathematics plan
- The quality of teaching and learning in History is very good and generally, a broad and balanced programme is taught. Interesting lessons were observed in some classes where the pupils' knowledge was improved while their skills of working as historians were also developed. Due emphasis is placed on enabling the pupils to develop an appropriate understanding of time and chronology, change and continuity and cause and effect. In

this regard, less use of the textbook to guide topics and lesson activities is advised in some classes.

- Most teachers use a variety of assessment modes including teacher observation, checklists and observation notes. From infants to middle classes, attempts have been made to map how individual pupils are progressing from year to year in the area of literacy and numeracy. This should be developed further and the data should then be used to assist in the formulation of differentiated programmes to meet the needs of individual pupils. Analysis of standardised test results should be conducted and used to inform classroom practice and the work of support teachers.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. While the school policy revolves around the staged approach to intervention (Circular 02/05), the development of classroom support plans should be implemented fully. There is good communication between support and classroom teachers. Support is provided through a mixture of withdrawal and successful in-class support models. Effective early intervention and prevention programmes are in place. More specific targets should be included in individual education plans and appropriate personal planning should be maintained by the support teachers. The duties of special needs assistant are carried out effectively.

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