

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Knockerra National School
Cooraclare, Kilrush, Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla: 183271

Date of inspection: 19 September 2012



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

1. Introduction

Knockerra National School is a co-educational primary school in the south-west of County Clare, operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. Currently, thirty-one pupils are enrolled in the school. At the time of the whole-school evaluation (WSE), no pupils were enrolled in first class. Pupil attendance levels are very good.

The school has two mainstream class teachers and has access to a learning support teacher and a resource teacher both based in other local schools.

This whole school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Science. 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 very well maintained and very well managed.
- The work of the principal in leading the school is very good.
- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school. Pupils are very well managed; their behaviour and engagement in lessons are of a very high standard.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are very skilful in differentiating lessons and in providing stimulating learning experiences for pupils.
- Very effective assessment strategies are employed by teachers and assessment data are used to very good effect to inform teachers' practices.
- The work undertaken by the school in developing school self-evaluation processes is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school should further develop means of disseminating school policies and general school information.
- The school should develop its practices in outlining and reviewing targets for pupils who receive additional support. The range of supports provided to pupils should be extended to include a focus on early literacy.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá gá le béim sa bhreis a leagan ar úsáid na mbriathar agus ar struchtúr abairtí a neartú. Chomh maith le sin, chun raon níos leithne d'ábhair léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil do na daltaí tá gá le hinfheistíocht a dhéanamh i dtuilleadh téacsanna agus leabhar.

In Irish, additional emphasis should be placed on the use of verbs and on the structure of sentences. There is a need for further investment in texts and books as a means of providing a wider range of reading materials for pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is very well managed. The board of management meets regularly and the principal provides a report on current and upcoming issues at each meeting. Board members have availed of training for their roles and they undertake specific responsibilities in support of the school.
- Good practices are in evidence in the management of school finances. School accounts are certified on an annual basis. An up-to-date financial report is provided by the treasurer at each board meeting and a summary statement of school accounts is made available to parents annually.
- The management of resources is very good. The school building and grounds are well maintained and resourced. The school has access to local sporting facilities and amenities. This has been advantageous to pupils and the general school community. The board is at an initial phase of involvement in monitoring pupils' progress and attainment. This role could be further expanded in conjunction with the development of school self-evaluation processes.
- Responses to parent questionnaires indicate that there is scope for the board to provide parents with more regular updates on its work in the school. To this end, it is recommended that an annual report on the running of the school be published by the board. The school website could be developed further to enhance the provision and dissemination of school information. Overall, responses received through parent questionnaires were very positive and it is evident that there is a good level of parental activity in school events.
- The principal provides very good leadership to the school. Her work in overseeing educational standards and curriculum implementation is praiseworthy. She strives to ensure that pupils can avail of a variety of educational experiences and extracurricular activities. The principal is assisted capably by the deputy principal whose work in attending to administrative tasks and in promoting practical activities in Mathematics is highly commendable.
- The management of pupils is very good. Pupils' behaviour and engagement in lessons are of a very high order. Very positive responses were received through pupil questionnaires indicating that pupils enjoy and value their experiences in school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. School organisational policies and whole-school curriculum plans are informative. These documents are reviewed and updated systematically.
- In the mainstream classes, the quality of long-term and fortnightly plans and monthly progress reports is generally very good with clear learning outcomes provided in most curriculum areas.
- Very good assessment practices are noted throughout the school. Checklists are used effectively in the junior settings and in each setting, pupils' written work is carefully monitored and class tests are administered regularly. Teachers' observations of pupils are recorded frequently and carefully. Assessment data are used to very good effect to

inform whole-school planning as well as the practice of mainstream teachers. Standardised test, screening tests and diagnostic tests are used appropriately.

- Commendable work has been undertaken in developing school self-evaluation processes. Longitudinal analyses of pupils' attainment are undertaken by the school and the data yielded are used purposefully to identify both whole-school and individual pupil trends in achievement. The school has made sound decisions regarding targets for school improvement and its work in addressing these targets is very good.
- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Stimulating learning experiences are provided for pupils and commendably, text books and work books are only used to a limited extent in addressing curriculum content. Teachers are very skilful in differentiating lessons in aspects of the curriculum and in enabling pupils to work at a level which matches their abilities. Overall, good standards are in evidence in pupils' learning with a number of pupils achieving very high standards in some curriculum areas.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tugtar go leor deiseanna do na daltaí an teanga a chleachtadh agus a úsáid i mbeirteanna agus i ngrúpaí. Úsáidtear réimse leathan modheolaíochtaí agus áiseanna san obair seo. Tá stóras foclóra forbartha ag formhór na ndaltaí sna meánranganna agus sna hardranganna. Moltar béim sa bhreis a leagan ar úsáid na mbriathar agus ar struchtúr abairtí a neartú. Léann na daltaí le líofacht agus tuiscint oiriúnach. Chun raon níos leithne d'ábhair léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil do na daltaí tá gá anois le hinfheistíocht a dhéanamh i dtuilleadh téacsanna agus leabhar. Tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach ag na daltaí i scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to practise and use the language in pairs and in groups. A wide range of teaching approaches and resources is used in this work. Pupils in the middle and senior classes have acquired a good vocabulary. Placing additional emphasis on the use of verbs and on consolidating the structure of phrases is recommended. The pupils read with fluency and understanding. To provide pupils with a broader range of reading materials, there is a need for investment in more texts and books. Good standards are achieved by pupils in functional and creative writing.

- English is very well taught and pupils' attainment is of a high standard. Oral language lessons successfully promote the development of pupils' vocabulary. Very good work is undertaken in developing early reading skills through focussed work on phonics and the conventions of print. At this level, further use of the language experience approach would benefit pupils. Pupils read fluently and independent reading is well fostered. Throughout the school, reading strategies and comprehension skills are developed in a very thorough manner. In general, the quality of pupils' handwriting is good. Functional and creative writing are undertaken regularly. Very good standards are achieved in this work.
- The quality of teaching in Mathematics is very good. Pupil achievement in Mathematics ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Good work is undertaken in developing early mathematical skills through use of suitable approaches and materials. At each class level, regular work is undertaken in mental mathematics and pupils' ability to answer

questions is good overall. Activity based learning, whole-class discussions and question and answer sessions are skilfully facilitated both in the classroom and in the surrounding environments. Effective differentiation strategies are used to enable pupils to engage in lessons in accordance with their ability levels.

- There is very good provision in Science with interesting work undertaken in each strand of the curriculum. Pupils engage in lessons in a very active manner enabling them to develop and refine their science skills. The practical work carried out in the school garden and in associated activities is deserving of particular credit as it facilitates collaborative work and the application of knowledge acquired through the strand *Living things*. In the senior classes, pupils readily recall and discuss aspects of their work to date in Science.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Good quality learning support and resource support are provided for pupils with identified needs. Pupils are withdrawn from the mainstream classroom for support, mostly on an individual basis. Some small-group work is also undertaken.
- Learning outcomes in literacy and mathematics are clearly addressed and skills are developed systematically. The teachers use appropriate resources and programmes and where relevant, the advice of other professionals is carefully incorporated into the support sessions. The training in *Maths Recovery* which is currently being accessed by the learning-support teacher will further boost provision for pupils. Suitable diagnostic tests are used by the teachers, together with ongoing assessment materials which are appropriately matched to pupils' needs.
- In the support settings, individual educational plans, weekly plans and in some instances daily plans are compiled for pupils. To further develop practice in these settings, teachers should aim to outline more specific, measurable targets for pupils. When reviewing pupils' educational plans, the school should indicate the extent to which previously identified targets have been achieved by pupils. Reference should also be made to the specific targets to be addressed in the subsequent period of instruction should further support be deemed necessary.
- There is scope for the school to prioritise early intervention and to provide targeted support in developing early literacy skills.

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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 Knockerra N.S. welcomes the content of the inspection report and thanks the inspector for the thorough and professional manner in which she carried out the inspection.

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 thanks the Inspectorate for highlighting the various strengths in our school and for the recommendations which we are implementing.