An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Lios An Halla
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

Uimhir rolla: 18465U

Date of inspection: 24 November 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Lios an Halla is a co-educational primary school located in Lissenhall, approximately four kilometres from the town of Nenagh in County Tipperary. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. At the time of the evaluation, 118 pupils were enrolled in the school, a significant increase since the previous evaluation in 2002, when forty pupils were enrolled. Attendance rates are very good.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in November 2011, which 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 building and surrounding areas are spacious and well resourced.
- Very good leadership is provided by the principal who is keenly committed to improving pupils' academic outcomes.
- The teachers are hard working and the quality of teaching in each of the mainstream class settings is good.
- Overall, the achievement of pupils in the four curriculum areas evaluated is good.
- The quality of the early intervention support provided by the learning-support teacher is excellent.

The following main recommendations are made:

- There is a need for further development of the arrangements in place for the drop off and collection of pupils.
- There is a need for the board to ensure that cleaning arrangements for the school are adequate and effective.
- The practice of charging parents for pupil participation in activities which take place during instruction time should be discontinued.
- There is a need to review some of the practices in the learning support/resource settings particularly those around outlining targets for pupils and identifying the most appropriate form of support for pupils.
- At some class levels, there is scope to develop pupils' turn-taking skills and classroom etiquette and to ensure that all pupils are appropriately engaged in lessons.
- There is scope for the mainstream class teachers to address more specifically the attitudinal aims of the Science curriculum and to ensure that more regular oral maths sessions are undertaken.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions effectively. Regular meetings are convened and minutes of meetings are carefully maintained. School accounts are certified annually.

- The board demonstrates good vision for the development of the school and its work in overseeing building projects is very good. Accordingly, the school building and surrounding areas are spacious and well resourced. The board should review the arrangements in place for the drop off and collection of pupils with a view to reducing the risks to safety posed by the current procedures. There is a need for the board to ensure that the school is cleaned regularly.

- The board recently instigated the establishment a parents' association. This provides very good support to the school. Responses received through parent questionnaires indicate that overall, parents are satisfied with the school and that the majority of pupils like school. While some good links have been established with parents and with the community, it is recommended that further parental involvement in the school be encouraged. The practice of charging parents for pupil participation in activities which take place during instruction time should be discontinued.

- Very good leadership is provided by the principal. He is keenly committed to improving pupils' academic outcomes and to the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum. The in-school management team undertake a range of duties diligently and effectively. As a means of further developing practice in the school, it is recommended that the duties of the in-school management team incorporate curriculum-leadership roles which are aligned to the priorities identified by the school.

- Overall, the management of pupils is good and the majority of pupils engage well in lessons. At some class levels, there is scope to develop pupils' turn-taking skills and classroom etiquette and to ensure that all pupils are appropriately engaged in lessons.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. Significant progress has been made by the board of management and the teachers in formulating a school plan.

- The quality of whole-school planning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Science is good. Classroom planning is of a good standard. Good efforts are made to plan differentiated learning activities for pupils who present with learning needs. As a means of developing practice, it is recommended that the teachers place further emphasis on planning for the development of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. The quality of planning in the learning-support/resource settings ranges from satisfactory to very good.

- Effective assessment practices are used to monitor pupils' progress. The school's self-evaluation practices are generally good. Teachers work collaboratively to monitor and analyse data generated from assessments and to identify curriculum areas which need to be improved.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular
School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- In each of the mainstream classes a good standard of teaching was observed. The teachers work diligently to ensure that lessons are interesting. A good range of methodologies and resources is used in lessons, including information and communication technologies (ICTs). Overall, pupil achievement is good and the majority of the pupils surveyed expressed the view that they are making good progress in Mathematics and in reading.


Good practice is in evidence in the teaching of Irish and in promoting an interest in Irish. The pupils recite rhymes and poems, they play traditional instruments and they sing songs musically. They participate willingly in pair work and in language games. In the junior and middle classes, the pupils' ability and confidence in speaking the language is reasonably good. In the senior classes, some of the pupils' ability to communicate is praiseworthy. Reading skills are suitably developed. In some classes placing additional emphasis on accuracy in grammar is recommended. A good standard of work was in evidence in the samples of written work completed by pupils in the senior classes during the evaluation.

- Good-quality teaching was observed in English. Oral language lessons are taught regularly using a range of contexts. In the junior classes, specific indicators of competence are used as benchmarks to monitor pupils' progress in oral language. This approach merits extension throughout the school. Pupils' early-literacy skills are well developed and throughout the school, pupils demonstrate good reading skills and a good interest in books. Further development of pupils' comprehension skills is recommended. Writing in a variety of genres is systematically taught. Placing additional emphasis on improving the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work is recommended.

- Mathematics is well taught. Guided discovery features strongly in lessons and very good work is undertaken in the school environment. Pupils co-operate well with each other in these well organised practical tasks. Pupils' ability to give oral reports on mathematical activities is good. When questioned on a range of topics, the majority of pupils answer confidently and accurately. To further consolidate their knowledge, it is recommended that regular oral maths sessions incorporating questions across the five strands of the curriculum be undertaken.

- The quality of teaching in Science is good. A broad programme of work is undertaken at each class level and the skills of predicting, fair testing and investigating are well
emphasised. There is scope for teachers to address more specifically the attitudinal aims of the curriculum; in particular to instil an awareness of energy consumption in pupils and to encourage positive environmental action in the school.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- Two teachers provide learning-support and resource support to pupils. The quality of this support ranges from satisfactory to very good.

- Pupils are withdrawn from the mainstream classrooms individually and in groups and it is evident that they have formed good relationships with the teachers. For the most part, the support sessions are well paced and well structured. Pupils’ progress in some areas is carefully monitored and appropriate programmes of work including *Reading Recovery* are used to develop skills in literacy.

- Individual programmes of work are provided for pupils. The quality of these programmes varies. In some instances, the targets set for pupils are limited to English and Mathematics. It is recommended that pupils’ individual plans reflect the priority needs identified in the relevant professional reports. To this end, there is a need to include targets which address pupils’ social and emotional development and to allocate adequate time for this work to be undertaken. Where support is provided for pupils in group or in whole-class settings, particular care should be taken to ensure that the range of pupils’ needs is appropriately addressed.

- At the senior infant level, early intervention is provided. The quality of the work carried out in developing pupils’ phonological and phonemic awareness and listening skills is excellent.

- Some pupils have been withdrawn from the mainstream classrooms for learning support for a number of years. In place of this practice, it is recommended that the school set and address time-bound, measurable targets over a twenty-week period of instruction. Further to this, the school should identify whether stage one or stage three interventions are required to further support pupils’ needs.

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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 Lissenhall N.S. wish to thank the Inspector of the Department of Education & Skills for the courteous and professional manner in which she conducted the W.S.E.

The Board of Management is pleased that the report acknowledges the strong spirit of commitment and generosity of time and effort that pervades throughout the school and the wider school community. The Board of Management is encouraged by the recognition given to the dedication and devotion of the Principal and staff in the school and the resultant quality of education.

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 and staff are currently in the process of implementing the recommendations as given in the report.