

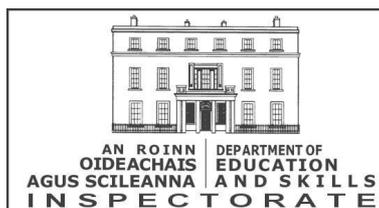
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**  
**REPORT**

**Caherea National School**  
**Lissycasey, Co. Clare**

**Uimhir rolla: 18541K**

**Date of inspection: 01 October 2014**



## Introduction

Caherea National School is a Catholic, co-educational primary school, close to the village of Lissycasey in County Clare. In October 2014, a Whole-School Evaluation–Management, Leadership and Learning was carried out in the school. This report is based on lessons observed, interaction with pupils, review of pupils' work, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, a selection of school documents, and meetings with the principal, special duties teacher and a representative of the board of management. There are two mainstream class teachers and one teacher provides support for pupils with special educational needs. Thirty-seven pupils are enrolled. Their school attendance rates are very good. 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.

Under the arrangements set out in Primary Circular 12/03, one of the mainstream teachers is involved in a teacher-swap arrangement for the duration of this academic year. Accordingly, the pupils in the junior and middle setting are being taught by a teacher from a different school. The two teachers involved are commended for their collaboration and careful planning which are helping to ensure consistency in teaching approaches and in pupils' learning.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- Spacious, good-quality school accommodation is provided.
- Overall, the school climate is inclusive and positive.
- The pupils are very well behaved and diligent.
- Pupils' learning in Mathematics is generally very good.
- Teachers' professional development is supported by the board and the teachers work co-operatively to keep abreast of up-to-date educational practices.
- The school has good supplies of resources to support and enhance teaching and learning.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- In English, a more challenging programme of work should be undertaken in oral language in the senior settings and further opportunities should be provided for creative and free writing.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá scóip le béim níos láidre a leagan ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach. *In Irish, there is scope for a stronger emphasis to be placed on the communicative approach.*
- The school should develop its practices in gathering and using assessment data.
- Planning practices in the special educational needs settings should be improved to ensure greater clarity in learning targets and more continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
- To facilitate additional early intervention and to enhance early skills in literacy and numeracy, additional in-class support should be provided.
- To further encourage pupils, classroom reward systems should be used to a greater degree and whole-school assemblies should be organised.

## Findings

### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Pupils' achievements in English range from satisfactory to good. In Mathematics, pupils demonstrate great confidence and their achievements are good to very good. Sa Ghaeilge, sonraítear caighdeán maith sa léitheoireacht agus sa scríbhneoireacht. Bíonn na daltaí in ann cumarsáid réasúnta maith a dhéanamh. *In Irish, a good standard is noted in reading and writing. The pupils can converse reasonably well.*
- Pupils' achievements in the Arts are good. They draw and paint, they engage in construction projects and they experiment with fabrics and clay. In Music, pupils play the tin-whistle and they are given some opportunities to use percussion instruments, to compose and to listen to music. In Social Environmental and Scientific Education, the pupils enjoy field trips and in Physical Education, they participate in locally organised tournaments and activities.

### 2. Quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. Where teachers' practices are very good, a high level of pupil engagement is noted.
- Pupils' written work is frequently monitored, their progress in aspects of the curriculum is assessed periodically and standardised tests are used. However, there is a need for greater consistency in assessment practices. At each class level, the type and frequency of assessment needs to be agreed. The data generated should be more carefully recorded and maintained and used to a greater extent to inform planning in the mainstream settings and as a basis for communication with the special educational needs teachers. Assessment practices within the special educational needs settings require improvement. While some tests are used to determine the nature of pupils' difficulties, at the time of the evaluation, the data generated from these tests had not been brought to the attention of the teacher who was providing support to a number of pupils with identified needs. All assessment data should be easily accessible so that they can be used consistently to inform planning and to monitor pupils' progress. In the mainstream settings, pupil self-assessment is being introduced this year. This is a positive development.
- Sonraítear roinnt dea-chleachtas i múineadh na Gaeilge. Úsáidtear réimse modhanna múinte chun scileanna na ndaltaí a fhorbairt, ach go háirithe ins na bunranganna. Ins na hardranganna, tá scóip le béim níos láidre a leagan ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach agus ar an ngramadach. Moltar tuilleadh deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaltaí cumarsáid neamhfhoirmiúil a dhéanamh i rith an lae agus páirt a ghlacadh in agallaimh agus i sceitsí. *Some good practice is noted in the teaching of Irish. A range of methodologies is used to develop pupils' skills especially in the junior classes. In the senior classes, there is scope for a stronger emphasis to be placed on the communicative approach and on grammar. It is recommended that pupils be given additional opportunities to converse informally during the day and to take part in interviews and sketches.*
- The teaching of English ranges from satisfactory to very good. In oral language, very effective use is made of story, games and rhymes in the infant and junior setting. In the middle and senior setting, pupils would benefit from a broader programme of work. This could include more opportunities to engage in debates and discussions and to make presentations based on challenging, age-appropriate topics. Poetry is well explored. Overall, more consistent use of an oral language programme would help to ensure greater progression in pupils' skills.

- Skills in early-reading and early-writing are developed systematically. Throughout the school, the pupils read a good range of materials and a comprehension development programme is used. In the middle and senior setting, good standards are noted in pupils' handwriting and in functional writing tasks. Opportunities for creative writing and free writing could be increased.
- Mathematics is well taught. Lessons incorporate teacher demonstrations, practical work and oral maths sessions which include cross-strand work. Mathematical language is well emphasised throughout lessons. Early mathematical activities are carefully planned and structured. The school is in the early stages of using a programme to challenge pupils with high ability in mathematics.
- At the time of the evaluation, a substitute teacher was supporting pupils with special educational needs. Prior to this arrangement, a number of personnel were attached to the role. On the whole, the quality of the provision is adequate. Support is provided on a one-to-one basis, in small groups and through in-class support. It is recommended that further in-class support be provided to facilitate early intervention and to enhance early skills in literacy and numeracy. The overall school climate is inclusive and within the mainstream settings some well-differentiated activities are organised to enable the pupils to work at an appropriate pace.
- In the support setting, the quality of planning ranges from poor to satisfactory. Some overall programmes of work are devised for pupils in the form of individual pupil learning profiles (IPLPs). Short term plans are set out for pupils in the form of fortnightly plans. Many of these plans are very repetitive and generic. In accordance with the *Learning Support Guidelines* and Primary Circular 02/05 an overall programme of work needs to be provided for each thirteen to twenty week period along with a weekly planning and progress record. More specific, measurable and developmental learning targets should be incorporated and a greater emphasis needs to be placed on addressing the spectrum of pupils' needs. Within these documents, an account of each pupil's ongoing progress should also be recorded. At the time of the evaluation, insufficient evidence was provided to confirm that the aforementioned practices are consistently in place.

### **3. Support for pupils' wellbeing**

- Pupils' wellbeing is supported. The overall school atmosphere is positive, the pupils are very well behaved and through questionnaires, they indicated that they feel safe in school and in the playground. There is some scope to encourage pupils to a greater extent by using more classroom reward systems and through whole-school assemblies at which pupils' efforts and achievements are affirmed and celebrated.
- 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*.

### **4. Leadership and Management**

- Overall, the school is well managed. The board of management fulfils its functions in managing school accounts and overseeing the development of school policies. In recent years, the school has been refurbished and extended resulting in good-quality, spacious accommodation. Teachers' professional development is well supported and the board provides useful resources to support and enhance teaching and learning. Good systems are in place to facilitate communication with parents.

- The principal, who has led the school for many years, works hard to ensure that the school is well organised and that routines are well established and consistently implemented. Parents' responses to questionnaires indicate that the majority agree that the school is well run. The principal has received strong support from the special-duties teacher who undertakes a number of practical and organisational tasks. It is evident that they have co-operated very well in reviewing school plans and in keeping abreast of up-to-date educational practices.
- As an immediate priority, the principal should lead a review of the school's assessment strategies as well as aspects of the support for pupils with special educational needs. The board should delegate a curriculum-related responsibility to the special-duties teacher.

#### **5. School Self-evaluation (SSE)**

- The school's work in SSE is progressing well. Parents and pupils have been consulted throughout the process and clear action plans have been set out.

#### **Conclusion**

- The school's capacity to improve and to implement recommendations is good.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1. Observations on the Content of the Inspection Report**

We are pleased with the affirmation given to the positive practices that take place in the school.

The Board of Management also welcomes the very positive oral feedback that was given to the teachers during the evaluation in relation to the pupils' enjoyable experiences in music, their work in poetry and their vocabulary in Irish. In addition to this, we feel it is important to note that *Gramadach sa Gaeilge* is consistently taught as documented *sna notaí coicíse* (fortnightly plans) and *cuntais mhiosula* (monthly reports).

The Board of Management would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the pupils' work across the curriculum, examples of which are displayed throughout the school.

## **Area 2. Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

Follow up actions planned are undertaken since the completion of the inspection. These activities reflect the findings and the recommendations of the inspection.

1. A comprehensive oral language staged programme is now being implemented throughout the school, headed by the special duties teacher.
2. We have taken on board the recommendations regarding Special Needs Planning and Assessment Strategies as advised by the Inspector.