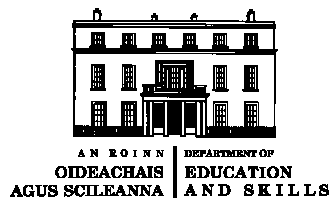


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Chnuacha
Castleknock, Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla: 18623M

Date of inspection: 12 November 2010



1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Chnuacha is a co-educational national school, under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and caters for the educational needs of 184 pupils. The holistic development of each pupil is central to the school's ethos. Enrolment trends have remained very stable and pupils have very good attendance levels. 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:

- The board of management is commended for its dedication to the development of the school.
- The principal and teaching staff play a pivotal role in creating a positive and supportive learning atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils are very responsive and participate with enthusiasm in all learning activities, demonstrating an ability to work both collaboratively and independently.
- Effective methodologies contribute significantly to pupils' good attainment levels in literacy and numeracy.
- Provision for pupils with special education needs is of a very good quality.
- Parents play an active and valued role in supporting the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The duties of the in-school management team should be reviewed to ensure a more active role in school self-evaluation.
- Moltar forbairt a dhéanamh ar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí i nGaeilge. (*Pupils' language skills should be further developed in Irish*).
- A greater focus on skills development and differentiation strategies should underpin planning for curriculum delivery and implementation.
- Provision for EAL pupils should focus in a concerted manner on pupils' cognitive language development

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board is properly constituted and meets regularly. Accounts are available to the patron for inspection. However, the board of management should now ensure that these are audited or certified annually to

ensure compliance with section 18 (1) Education Act 1998. The board is supportive of the school and has worked in a concerted manner to ensure the completion of the school refurbishment and extension.

- The in-school management team is comprised of the principal, a deputy principal and four special duties teachers. The principal is commended for the creation of a positive nurturing atmosphere within the school. The work of the principal is instrumental in managing the efficient and effective administration of the school. Further focus on the curricular aspects of school leadership is now required. Members of the in-school management team carry out their duties diligently. A review of their duties is necessary to reflect the identified needs of the school and to effectively monitor the implementation of the whole-school plan.
- The management of material resources is good and attractive learning environments are created. Teacher preference is the main criteria in the allocation of classes. A staff rotation policy documenting a broader range of criteria is recommended.
- Very effective communication strategies are in place within the school community. The well-established parents' association plays a very vital and valued role in the life of the school. Views of parents elicited in parents' questionnaires indicate a high level of satisfaction with education provision in the school.
- The management of pupils is very good. Pupils' self-esteem is nurtured and their achievements are regularly celebrated. In questionnaires administered to pupils during the evaluation, a high number of pupils reported that they enjoy positive relationships with their peers and feel safe in their school environment.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is good. The planning process is led by the principal and the board of management. There is, however, greater scope to formally involve parents' in this process. Some good quality whole-school curricular policies have been devised. There is potential to align some existing curricular policies to the needs of the school and to further ensure their implementation at individual class level. Some administrative policies need to be reviewed in line with recent changes in legislation. School self-evaluation is at an early stage. To advance this process the school is advised to review its current school development plan and ensure that it encompasses identified school needs. Action plans should be devised to progress the implementation of agreed priorities.
- Long-term and short-term planning is provided by all teachers in support of their work and some very good exemplars were noted in this regard. Aspects of some short-term planning should be more closely aligned to the curriculum rather than to the structure of textbooks. Monthly progress records are maintained. The potential to use these records for the monitoring of curriculum implementation should be explored as part of on-going school self-evaluation.
- 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

- Baineann na daltaí taitneamh as foghlaim na Gaeilge. Baintear feidhm as modhanna múinte éagsúla chun an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh agus as straitéisí éifeachtacha chun cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí a chothú. Forbraítear a gcuid scileanna éisteachta go córasach i gcuid de na ranganna. Aithrisíonn na daltaí, sna bunranganna ach go háirithe, rainn agus dánta le taitneamh. Moltar an scéalaíocht a úsáid a thuilleadh i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Ar an iomlán, tá cumas na ndaltaí lag i struchtúrú abairtí agus i labhairt go líofa i nGaeilge. Dá bhrí sin ní mór na heiseamláirí agus na struchtúir theanga a fhorbairt go córasach ar bhonn uile-scoile. Tá sé ar chumas cuid de na daltaí téacsanna simplí a léamh le cruinneas áirithe. Moltar plean léitheoireachta a leagan amach agus a chur i bhfeidhm sa scoil. Ní mór plean do thús na litearthachta agus scéim don fhocal-aithint, don fhóineolaíocht agus do thuiscint na léitheoireachta a chur san áireamh sa phlean sin. B'fhiú don fhoireann machnamh a chaitheamh le hábhar oiriúnach a roghnú don léitheoireacht. Is scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil is mó a chleachtar sa scoil. Is gá plean cuimsitheach do phróiseas na scríbhneoireachta a dhearadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm sa scoil. Baineann cuid de na hoidí úsáid as an nGaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil go rialta. Is fiú an cleachtadh maith seo a scaipeadh ar fud na scoile.

Pupils enjoy learning Irish. Various methodologies are used to teach Irish and to foster pupils' communicative abilities. Pupils' listening skills are developed systematically in some classrooms. Pupils in junior classes, in particular, recite rhymes and poems with enjoyment. The school should use story more extensively in the teaching and learning of Irish. In general pupils' capacity to structure sentences and to speak fluently in Irish is poor. It is necessary, therefore, to progressively develop exemplars and structures of language on a whole-school basis. Some pupils can read simple texts with a certain amount of accuracy. A plan for reading should be devised and implemented in the school. This should include a plan for early literacy and schemes for word recognition, phonological awareness and reading comprehension. Consideration should be given to choosing appropriate reading material for pupils. In general it is functional writing that is practised in Irish. It is recommended that a comprehensive plan for process writing be devised and implemented in the school. Some teachers use Irish incidentally on a regular basis. This good practice should be emulated throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good overall. Pupils' oral language competence is well developed and many pupils are very confident and capable communicators. Many pupils read fluently and independently and with very good expression and understanding. However, differentiated reading activities should be planned and implemented to cater for the particular literacy needs of some pupils. Pupils' appreciation of selected poetry is undertaken successfully. The committing to memory of a wide range of poetry is recommended as a whole-school approach. In a number of contexts some good exemplars of narrative, poetry and report writing were in evidence. A systematic approach to the development of pupils' independent writing skills is recommended at a whole-school level. Pupils' presentation and penmanship skills should also be developed incrementally.
- The quality of learning and teaching in Mathematics is very good and pupils' achievement is high. The use of data garnered from school-based assessment appropriately guides the introduction and delivery of a successful early intervention programme for the teaching of mathematics. Pupils are enabled to use mathematical language accurately. Commendable emphasis is placed on mental calculations to develop pupils' facility with number. In some instances lessons are too challenging for pupils who have not mastered mathematical concepts. It is recommended that active learning approaches and differentiated learning programmes be further employed to address pupils' diverse learning needs.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is good. Pupils' conceptual understanding and language is well developed in all classrooms. Suitable resources and well-managed group work further enrich pupils' conceptual knowledge, procedural understanding and skills development in many classrooms. A review of the whole-school plan for Science should focus on the application of the scientific process through suitable opportunities for designing and making. An audit of the school's environment should be undertaken as a basis on which to plan further structured and progressive exploration and investigation across the strands of the science curriculum.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. In some instances, however, classroom management skills should be further developed to ensure that all pupils are purposefully engaged in learning. Effective methodologies are employed and learning activities are interesting. Pupils' questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate a high level of interest and enthusiasm in their learning. There is scope to ensure that pair and group work are more purposeful in some learning activities. To optimise learning outcomes for all pupils, further provision for specific differentiation is recommended to ensure appropriate challenge or support for pupils. A greater emphasis on lesson consolidation is recommended in some contexts. Good quality resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), are used effectively in many lessons but the over reliance on textbooks in some contexts should be reviewed. Some very good exemplars of assessment practices were noted. Further discussion at whole-school level would be worthwhile in ensuring that aspects of ongoing formative assessment practices are more closely aligned with curriculum objectives.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school's whole-school learning support policy, which was recently reviewed, effectively addresses all areas of support. Suitable educational plans are devised for pupils receiving supplementary teaching. It is advised that short-term planning be reviewed, however. Interactions between teachers and pupils are very affirming and encouraging of pupils. Lessons are well structured and very suitable resources are used judiciously to support learning. Teachers employ a variety of teaching approaches and strategies to engage pupils in learning activities. The in-class support and co-operative team teaching approaches are very effective in progressing pupils' learning. The special educational needs team is to be commended for continuously endeavouring to identify and address pupils' learning needs on a whole-school basis.
- Support for pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) is provided on a withdrawal and on an in-class basis. The lessons observed were well planned and delivered in a supportive and affirming environment. Visual resources are used appropriately and suitable strategies are in place to facilitate language acquisition and usage. The *Primary School Assessment Kit* materials are used to assess pupils' proficiency and there is evidence that the pupils are making good progress in acquiring communicative skills. There is some collaboration between the support teacher and classroom teacher with regard to this provision. At this juncture however, language support for some groups should be more closely aligned with the work of the classroom to build pupils' cognitive language skills and facilitate their conceptual understanding. The EAL policy should be reviewed to ensure that it provides clearer guidance on appropriate programmes of work which will underpin language support teaching.

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 welcomes the WSE recommendations which will serve as a useful guide to school planning in the short and medium term. The Board also acknowledges the professionalism and courtesy with which the inspectors carried out their task. It is extremely proud of the portrait of a caring, student-centred school community which emerges from this comprehensive report. The board acknowledges the dedication and commitment of all staff.

It is gratifying that the inspectors recognised and commended the wonderful work of the special educational needs team – the effective policy development, use of suitable education plans and well structured lessons, the variety of engaging teaching strategies, the in-class support and co-operative team teaching approaches, and the affirmation and encouragement of pupils.

The report highlights the very good quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics and the high levels of pupil achievement. The report also recognises the quality of teaching and learning in English and Science.

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

A review of the in-school management team's duties will be undertaken in the new school year. A review of the whole school plan for Irish has already commenced with a view to addressing the recommendations of the WSE. Staff planning meetings will in future focus to a greater extent on skills development and differentiation strategies and on improving the provision for EAL pupils.