

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Convent Primary School
Killaloe, Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla: 186240**

Date of inspection: 26 May 2011



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

1. Introduction

Convent Primary School, Killaloe is an all-girls school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. There are 97 pupils enrolled and the school has four mainstream class teachers. The last school inspection was undertaken in 2003 and five members of staff have been appointed in recent years.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in May 2011. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education.

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 teachers are committed, hardworking and professional
- The quality of teaching is good, with very good implementation of the principles and emphases of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) at some class levels.
- Overall, good standards are achieved by pupils in English, Irish and Mathematics.
- The board of management works effectively to manage the school and to support the school staff, pupils and parents.
- The principal and the deputy principal provide strong and effective leadership to the school community.
- Whole-school planning processes are good.
- The school climate is very positive. Pupils' behaviour and application to tasks and their engagement in the learning process is excellent.
- A commendable approach to the teaching of Social, Personal and Health Education is adopted.
- Parents are supportive of the school and indicate high levels of satisfaction with overall school performance.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management actively pursue the amalgamation of the school with the board, staff and parents of Killaloe Boys' National School (BNS) and with the appropriate sections of the Department of Education and Skills.
- The deployment of the learning-support and resource teachers should be reviewed.
- A whole-school approach to short-term classroom planning should be devised and implemented.
- Early intervention supports for pupils in the infant and junior classes should be provided.
- Additional emphasis should be given to oral work in Mathematics and in English.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management manages the work of the school in an efficient and conscientious manner. Good work has been achieved by the board in considering and ratifying whole-school policies. The board undertakes various projects on a regular basis to improve the school's resources and infrastructure. Board members undertake various roles and responsibilities and their voluntary contribution to the school is commendable. School accounts are certified. Together with the board of management of Killaloe BNS, initial discussions have taken place on the amalgamation of both schools. This work should be further progressed to ensure the future provision of co-educational schooling for the pupils in Killaloe.
- The work of the school is supported by a committed parents' association which has been re-constituted in the current school year. Parents indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the school and the education provided to their children.
- The principal and the deputy principal provide strong and effective leadership to the school. They work collaboratively and their vision for the school is to preserve the ethos, provide a high-quality education for the pupils and to plan for the strategic development of the school.
- The physical environment of the school is maintained to a high standard. Good progress has been made in increasing the levels of resources in use to support information and communication technologies (ICT).
- There is a very positive climate in evidence in the school. The teachers collaborate closely with each other and have succeeded in creating an environment that nurtures high standards. The relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and positive. The management of pupils and pupils' behaviour is a significant strength of this school. Very good attention is given to pupils with emotional or social needs and pupils' holistic development is cultivated. The pupils are motivated in their learning and they engage very effectively in the range of learning activities provided.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is good and much work has been achieved by the principal in leading the planning process. A range of commendable whole-school administrative policies has been formulated. The school's curriculum plans are detailed and further review and development of plans for English and Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum is recommended.
- The school is engaging in internal self-evaluation. Commendable practice includes the aggregation and analysis of data from standardised tests on an annual basis. Commitment to on-going school development and improvement is in evidence. Further attention should be given to monitoring curriculum implementation and teaching approaches and strategies.
- All teachers devise long-term and short-term plans. In some instances these plans are of a very good standard. At some class levels, the inclusion of additional learning targets for the intended period of instruction is recommended. It is advised that short-term plans take the format of fortnightly plans in order that more specific learning outcomes can be identified. These plans should be based, as far as possible, on the specific objectives of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) rather than the textbooks. Establishing strong links

between planning and assessment would assist teachers in ensuring that pupils' learning is consolidated. There is potential for monthly progress reports (cuntais mhíosula) to be monitored as part of the process of school self-evaluation and for overseeing continuity and progression and curriculum implementation throughout the school.

- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good with very good practice in evidence in some settings. Teachers are hard working and the classrooms provide well-managed learning environments where pupils' contributions are nurtured. A good range of teaching approaches and strategies is used at each class level. Further sharing of good practice amongst teachers will contribute greatly to their continuing professional development.
- I rith na meastóireachta, bhí dea-chleachtas i dteagasc na Gaeilge le sonrú ag gach rangléibhéal. Cuireann na hoidí béim mholta ar cluichí teanga, ar rólglacadh, obair i bpéirí agus ar an tréimhse cumarsáide i ngach ceacht. Tá scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí go mór le moladh sna hardranganna. Cothaítear scileanna léitheoireachta go cuí agus léann na ndaltaí le tuiscint. Tá cruasach fíorleabhar ar fáil agus léann na daltaí rémse leabhar. Tá obair scríofa na ndaltaí le moladh.

During the evaluation, there was good practice in the teaching of Irish in evidence at each class level. The teachers place commendable emphasis on language games, role taking, pair work and on the communicative phase in each lessons. The pupils achieve very commendable communication skills in the senior classes. Reading skills are developed appropriately and the pupils read with understanding. The pupils read a range of books and 'real' books are provided. Pupils' written work is praiseworthy.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Stimulating oral language activities such as debates and discussions in pairs and groups are undertaken. The purposeful extension of pupils' vocabulary and oral skills is advised in some classes. At all class levels, reading is well taught. Differentiated programmes are provided in the infant classes and this practice is commendable. In the junior, middle and senior classes the development of literacy skills is emphasised and pupils read textbooks, class novels and library books. Pupils' comprehension skills receive appropriate attention and teachers employ good questioning skills to develop pupils' responses. Penmanship skills and early writing skills are developed appropriately. The pupils are encouraged to write creatively and good standards are achieved by many pupils in this work. It is recommended that the more systematic teaching of writing at all class levels should be undertaken and that more samples of pupils' writing be displayed in the classrooms.
- The quality of teaching, learning and achievement in Mathematics is good. Well-structured lessons are undertaken with good emphasis is placed on mathematical games, concrete materials and ICT to explore mathematical concepts. As a means of

further developing good practice, teachers are advised to engage in more mental maths sessions and to allow opportunities for revision and consolidation of material on a more regular basis.

- Social Personal and Health Education lessons are taught competently and a good range of strategies and approaches is used at each class level. The code of behaviour in the school promotes positive behaviour and school assemblies which focus on friendship and anti-bullying are features of the whole-school approaches to nurturing pupils' competencies in this area.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports provided to pupils is good and the two support teachers work very effectively to deliver programmes to individual pupils and groups of pupils. Good relationships have been established with pupils. Lessons incorporate activities which are appropriately matched to pupils' needs and strengths.
- The caseload assigned to the learning support/resource teachers needs to be reviewed to ensure that the school is adhering to its policy on learning support and to the *Learning Support Guidelines*. In particular, whole-class groups should not be withdrawn for supports as many of these pupils do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the learning support caseload. Procedures which facilitate mainstream class teachers, support teachers and parents to meet to discuss plans for individual pupils should be established. It is also recommended that class teachers have copies of individual plans and that they implement differentiated programmes for pupils with learning needs in the mainstream class setting. Where possible, pupils should receive supports within the mainstream class settings. Pupils in the infant and junior classes should be prioritised for inclusion in the learning support caseload.

Published October 2011

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 Killaloe Convent Primary School welcomes the findings of the Whole School Evaluation of 26th of May, 2011. In particular it welcomes the due recognition given to the hard work, commitment and professionalism of the management and staff of the school. The Board of Management appreciates the recognition given to the voluntary role of its members. We are proud of the positive climate in the school which enjoys the support of the Parents, Pupils and Staff and which continues to contribute towards the overall performance of 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.

Since the WSE took place, the Board has engaged in further discussions with the relevant stakeholders on the issue of amalgamation with Killaloe Boys' National School and are actively pursuing this. The deployment of the Learning-Support and Resource Teachers are being reviewed in line with the WSE recommendations. Further development of the key curricular areas that were recommended in the report is also taking place. Finally, the Board acknowledges the professional and courteous manner in which the WSE was conducted.