

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil San Nioclás
Windgap, Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 18660S

Date of inspection: 19 September 2012



1. Introduction

Scoil San Nioclás is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The attendance of almost all ninety-five pupils is very good. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The work of the board of management is very effective in supporting the management and development of the school.
- The principal exhibits highly commendable leadership skills.
- The teachers work skilfully and diligently and engage regularly in continuous professional development.
- The pupils are enthusiastic, hard-working and committed learners.
- School self-evaluation has been commenced successfully.
- *Sonraítear go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge á chothú i measc na ndaltaí. A positive attitude towards Irish is being cultivated among the pupils.*

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Curriculum co-ordination should become an integral element of the work of in-school management team members.
- The increased differentiation of teaching and learning activities is advised to ensure that all pupils are challenged and supported appropriately in their learning.
- The continuum of support for pupils with special educational needs should be implemented fully, with particular emphasis on the use of classroom support plans.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is very effective in supporting the management and development of the school. The members share their specific talents and expertise generously and purposefully. The continued development of the role of the board in considering teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters is welcome. It is advised that the board issue an annual report on the operation of the school.
- The principal demonstrates highly commendable leadership skills and undertakes her curricular and administrative duties in a most competent manner. In conjunction with the teaching staff, the principal has identified and successfully progressed programmes to improve attainment in literacy. The deputy principal contributes significantly to whole-school initiatives. In order to maximise the potential of the in-school management team, it

- is recommended that clearly identified duties regarding curriculum co-ordination be assigned to post of responsibility holders.
- The school and grounds are presented attractively. Classrooms are well equipped and resources are used effectively to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The teachers engage regularly in professional development courses and new learning is shared systematically among them.
 - There is good communication between school and home and parents are kept well informed regarding their children's progress. While a facility exists for parents to contribute to school policy, the results of the parent questionnaire indicate that a small number of parents are not aware of this opportunity. An increased role for parents in the development and review of pertinent aspects of the school plan should therefore be facilitated. The parents' association is praised for its commitment to and support of the school. It plays a significant and successful role in fundraising and has recently provided a workshop for all parents on bullying.
 - The pupils are enthusiastic, hard-working and committed learners. The teachers and special needs assistants interact warmly and respectfully with them. The school should now consider ways in which greater decision-making opportunities could be afforded to pupils, possibly through the establishment of a students' council. The responses to the questionnaire issued to pupils indicate that most pupils consider their school to be a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. Organisational planning is comprehensive and well organised. Curriculum plans are successful in providing an overview of the implementation of each curriculum area. In order to optimise the usefulness of curriculum planning, it is recommended that greater guidance on oral language development in English and the progression of reading skills in Irish be provided.
- The teachers have undertaken an honest and thorough whole-school review, focusing on preparation for teaching, learning to learn and pupil engagement in learning. As a consequence, an action plan for literacy development has been drafted with good progress noted in many aspects of the plan. The school is also commended for its detailed analysis of pupil assessment outcomes.
- All teachers provide planning to guide teaching and learning at classroom level. It is advised that further emphasis be placed on the use of objective-based planning.
- 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

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. In some settings, teaching is managed expertly to accommodate the particular demands of dual-grade teaching. A range of teaching methodologies is used successfully to ensure that the pupils engage positively in their learning. In some contexts, differentiation is used particularly effectively. It is advised that this good practice be implemented throughout the school to ensure that all pupils are challenged and supported appropriately in their

learning. The responses from the parent questionnaire indicate that almost all parents consider that teaching is good in the school.

- Whole-school assessment practice is commendable. Summative assessment features prominently and records of pupils' progress are maintained. Pupil self-assessment has been introduced successfully and it is advised that further opportunities for self-assessment and peer-assessment be explored.
- Tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Sonraítear go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge á chothú i measc na ndaltaí. Cuirtear béim shuntasach ar an gcumarsáid agus ar úsáid na mbriathra i ngach seomra ranga. Tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaith de na daltaí abairtí a struchtúrú go cruinn. Toisc go bhfuil ag éirí go breá ag formhór na ndaltaí sa léitheoireacht, b'fhiú a dtaithí léitheoireachta a shaibhriú trí fíor leabhair a chur ar fáil agus ceachtanna a mhúineadh bunaithe orthu. Múintear scileanna scríbhneoireachta go céimniúil agus léiríonn formhór na ndaltaí cumas maith.
- *A good standard of teaching and learning is being achieved in Irish. A positive attitude towards Irish is being cultivated among the pupils. Significant emphasis is placed on conversation and the use of verbs in all classrooms. Many pupils are able to structure sentences correctly. As most pupils are succeeding well with reading, it would be worthwhile enhancing their reading experience through making real books available and teaching lessons based on these. Writing skills are taught incrementally and a majority of pupils display a good ability.*
- In English, the overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Commendable work is being undertaken on improving attainment in literacy with the implementation of praiseworthy initiatives including guided reading at infant level. The teachers have identified the need to further develop the pupils' oral language skills. It is advised that the development of these skills be addressed more systematically. Emergent reading is developed skilfully and most pupils throughout the school read with appropriate fluency and accuracy. The responses to the pupil questionnaire indicate that most pupils consider that they are doing well at reading. The quality of the pupils' independent writing skills is very good and they demonstrate significant development of their abilities as they progress through the school. Handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work are of a high quality.
- Provision for Mathematics is commendable. The teachers are successful in situating concepts in the context of the pupils' own experiences. Mathematical language is developed in a consistent manner and good emphasis is placed on the acquisition of number facts. The pupils in all classes benefit from engagement in active learning and they use concrete resources frequently to support the consolidation of their learning. Collaborative learning approaches are practiced successfully in some classes. Increased emphasis on collaboration in learning should be extended throughout the school. The responses from the pupil questionnaire indicate that most pupils consider that they are doing well at Maths.
- In the Visual Arts, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. The pupils enjoy access to a broad curriculum. Talk and discussion are engaged in successfully at the outset of lessons. Visual and other stimuli are used productively to stimulate creativity. Commendable integration with other areas of the curriculum enhances the quality of the pupils' learning experiences. While teacher observation is used to assess pupils' work, the use of a broader range of assessment strategies would extend the progressive development of the pupils' skills.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. The teachers present engaging, well-paced and well-resourced lessons that are tailored to the pupils' individual needs. Learning targets are devised collaboratively and reviewed regularly. The proposed development of the current in-class support model is welcome.
- The school's policy for pupils with SEN requires review. It is recommended that the continuum of support for pupils, as outlined in Circular 02/05, be implemented fully, with particular emphasis on the use of classroom support plans.
- The school makes special provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and these pupils benefit from careful attention to their individual learning needs. Teaching is affirming, encouraging and well paced. The integration of these pupils with the main body of the school is managed appropriately and successfully.

Published February 2013.

