

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

An Grianán NS
Mount Temple, Moate,
County Westmeath
Uimhir rolla: 18679Q

Date of inspection: 10 November 2011



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

1. Introduction

An Grianán NS is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. The school is situated in the village of Mount Temple and has an enrolment of 197 pupils. Attendance levels are generally very good. The board is advised to monitor the increasing trend in the number of pupils who are absent for twenty days or more over the course of the school year. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- Teachers manifest a firm commitment to their teaching and to the holistic development of the pupils.
- The pupils are courteous, well behaved and engage enthusiastically in their learning.
- Special education provision is of a high standard.
- Very effective school self-evaluation methodologies underpin whole-school initiatives in literacy.
- The board of management is committed to the development of the school.
- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school and mutually respectful relationships are evident.
- The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- All curricular policies should be reviewed to ensure continuity and progression of content and skills as pupils progress through the school.
- Moltar béim a leagan ar chothú chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge agus córas céimnithe d'fhorbairt teanga na ndaltaí a chur i bhfeidhm. *The fostering of pupils conversational abilities in Irish should be emphasised and a progressive system for the development of pupils' language should be implemented throughout the school.*
- A whole-school approach to writing should be devised to ensure that all classes are exposed to an appropriate range of writing genres and to ensure consistency in penmanship and presentation throughout the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and carries out its duties purposefully. Roles are clearly delineated and individual members share individual talents and

expertise generously. A clear financial report is presented at each board meeting. It is recommended that school accounts should be externally audited on regular basis.

- The principal demonstrates very good interpersonal skills and cultivates a collegial working environment. The in-school management team undertakes a range of duties with diligence. The deputy principal displayed praiseworthy leadership skills in recent times while undertaking the duties of principal. The strengthening of the curricular responsibilities of all post holders is recommended.
- Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school and express satisfaction with the arrangements in place to discuss their children's progress.
- The management of pupils is very good. Interactions between pupils and staff are respectful and positive.
- The school is a focal point of the local and wider community. Very effective communications systems are in place. The school's website provides high quality information on school activities. Pertinent school policies are clearly displayed.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Well-devised organisational policies contribute to the effective management of the school. The school is advised to develop policies on exemptions from Irish and on data protection.
- A systematic review of curricular plans is recommended. Updated plans should provide clear guidance on appropriate content objectives for each class level, ensure that learning is progressive and developmental throughout the school and emphasise the development of pupils' skills in various curricular areas.
- Mainstream class teachers plan adequately for their work. It is recommended that short-term plans be based on specific curricular objectives and that teachers plan more carefully for the teaching of language and for the development of pupils' skills
- The school is advised to review the format of monthly progress records so that they detail attained learning objectives as opposed to general content covered. These records should be used to monitor the implementation of the curriculum.
- Good quality individual educational plans (IEPs) are prepared for pupils with low incidence special educational needs. Parents are involved in their compilation and receive a copy of the IEP. Pupil profiles and long-term plans are available for all other pupils in receipt of support. It is advised that the learning targets in IEPs and long-term plans should reflect priority learning needs and inform short-term planning.
- The school has introduced some very successful curriculum initiatives aimed at enhancing pupils' literacy skills. These involve initial assessment, implementing an agreed whole-school initiative and re-assessment. This is very good practice which should be further embedded and developed within the school.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has not formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* (September 2011). The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school and teachers are competent, diligent and manifest openness to new ideas. They capably implement a range of very effective classroom management strategies. The pupils' responses to questionnaires indicate that they find their lessons interesting. Pupils' involvement in a variety of extracurricular initiatives nurtures their holistic development. Written work is systematically monitored. It is recommended that further formative feedback and guidance for pupils with regard to appropriate standards of presentation be provided.
- D'fhéadfaí cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge a fheabhsú. Múintear an chuid is mó de na ceachtanna trí Ghaeilge agus díreann aird ar cheithre snáithe an churaclaim. Téann sé dian ar dhaltaí comhrá nádúrtha a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge, áfach, agus, uaireanta, léiríonn siad easpa tuisceana ar cheisteanna bunúsacha. Moltar mar sin, béim uile-scoile a leagan ar chothú chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí. Chuige sin, ní mór a chinntiú go múintear idir fhoclóir agus struchtúir chainte cinnte i ngach ceacht agus go gcuirtear ar chumas na ndaltaí an teanga nua-fhoghlamtha a úsáid i suímh nádúrtha. Is den tábhacht freisin go ndéantar cinnte de go bhforbraítear an clár teagaisc go córasach tríd an scoil.
- *There is scope to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Irish. Most lessons are taught through Irish and the four strands of the curriculum are afforded attention. However pupils experience difficulty engaging in natural conversations in Irish, and, in some cases, do not understand basic questions. It is therefore recommended that a whole-school emphasis be placed on the development of pupils' communicative abilities. To this end it should be ensured that all lessons involve the teaching of both vocabulary and language structures and that the pupils are enabled to use newly acquired language in real situations. It is also essential that the learning programmes are developed systematically throughout the school.*
- Teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. Attainment in reading is very good for many pupils and a positive attitude to reading is successfully fostered in all classes. A range of successful initiatives impact positively on pupils' reading fluency and comprehension. There is scope to further embed these strategies at all class levels and to ensure that a consistent approach to differentiated group work is implemented throughout the school.
- Talk and discussion across a range of themes is evident in all classes and some good poetry work was noted. A more structured approach to language development, with a focus on discrete oral language objectives, should be devised to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' oral language competencies. Further opportunities for pupils to write independently in a range of genres, a systematic approach to process writing and the consistent implementation of the school's penmanship policy is recommended.
- The overall standard of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good and attainment levels for many pupils are very good. The teaching of Mathematics places an appropriate emphasis on discussion and on connecting concepts to pupils' life experiences. It is recommended that the emphasis on differentiation be increased and that collaborative problem solving be used more consistently at all class levels. Further attention to strands such as *Algebra* and *Data* is also advised.

- Teaching and learning in History is satisfactory. Some good work involving history projects and the use of artefacts and class museums was observed. Appropriate attention is afforded to the subject-specific language of History and teachers make judicious use of talk and discussion and group work in lessons. There is a need to ensure that all programmes reflect the breadth, depth and spiral nature of the curriculum. An integrated approach across the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education curriculum should be implemented. There should be more emphasis on the development of key skills and concepts at each level
- Appropriate standardised and diagnostic assessment practices are in place. The development of a recording system to track individual pupil attainment for the duration of their time in school is recommended. This approach will enable the school to use comprehensive data to further support or challenge pupils' learning. The quality of assessment strategies at individual class level is varied. The development of checklists in some contexts is advised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Highly commendable support is provided to pupils with special educational needs. Teachers in support settings operate very successfully as a team and have introduced a number of very effective whole-school initiatives such as early intervention, language comprehension programmes and station teaching. These initiatives impact positively on pupils' learning. The school is encouraged to continue to development in this area.
- Very appropriate use is made of all models of support, including in-class, individual and group work. Very good attention is focused on inclusion, on enhancing pupils' self esteem, and on meeting their holistic needs. Instruction in all cases is focused and pupils are making good progress.
- The teachers are advised to ensure that the existing good practice in special educational needs settings becomes embedded in the school's overall practice.

