

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Íde
Corbally, Limerick
Uimhir rolla: 18872K**

Date of inspection: 3 October 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Íde is a large co-educational national school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. It is located close to the river Shannon in the eastern suburbs of Limerick City. There are 780 pupils enrolled and enrolment is stable. Overall attendance rates are above average for an urban school and incidences of prolonged absence are carefully monitored.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in September 2013. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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:

- The board of management, principal and in-school management team carry out their leadership functions in a highly capable manner.
- Very effective management and communication systems are in place. These maximise the quality and extent of pupil–teacher interactions and class contact time generally.
- The work of the teachers is highly commendable. Their willingness to engage in professional development and to collaborate with colleagues is particularly noteworthy.
- Very effective structures are in place to lead and develop innovative practices in the school. An action research-based approach is taken to this work, which is judiciously planned and monitored.
- High standards are achieved by the majority of pupils in Mathematics and English.
- The school's assessment practices are very good. Assessment data are used to very good effect to inform teacher's planning and teaching.
- An extensive programme of extra-curricular and co-curricular projects and initiatives is in place. These projects and initiatives enable pupils to develop their skills and interests in a wide range of areas.
- The pupils are very well behaved and confident.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Tá gá le tuilleadh forbartha a dhéanamh ar chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge, go háirithe sna ranganna sinsearacha. (*There is scope for further development of pupils' ability to communicate through Irish, particularly in the senior classes.*)
- In English, a structured whole-school approach should be applied to the introduction and development of writing genres.
- The board should review its procedures for overseeing the ongoing maintenance, upkeep and general cleaning of the internal school environment and classrooms. This review

should seek to ensure that the board's policies and directives are carried out appropriately.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management supports the work of the school in a very effective manner. Individual members of the board generously volunteer their particular skills in the service of the school. Careful records are maintained and accounts are certified on an annual basis. The board affords close attention to accountability structures through consideration of annual reports from the staff and in-school management teams. Consequently, the board is particularly well informed about levels of school effectiveness. The board should review its procedures for overseeing the ongoing maintenance, upkeep and general cleaning of the internal school environment and classrooms. This is to ensure that its policies and directives are carried out appropriately.
- The principal leads the school in a highly capable manner. He has overseen the successful implementation of many efficient management systems. These systems are intrinsic to the successful organisation of teaching and learning in this very large school. The principal has assiduously cultivated a learning culture by remaining abreast of educational research. His leadership has successfully promoted initiative and knowledge sharing throughout the school. He interacts with pupils regularly by taking writing classes, through activities organised for exceptionally able learners and through implementing consistent routines. The principal receives unstinting support from a conscientious deputy principal and 9 special duties teachers. The special duties teachers combine effectively in teams to pursue development projects identified in the school development plan. An annual report of their work is presented to the board by the deputy principal. The current report clearly illustrates the broad range of tasks undertaken by the post holders.
- Intensive efforts are made to augment resources for teaching and learning on an ongoing basis and as funding permits. Recent investment has resulted in the provision of extensive resources for the development of pupils' literacy skills. There is also on-going development of information and communication technology (ICT) as an integrated teaching and learning tool. The school has developed an outdoor classroom and a science room, both of which are integral to the school's efforts to promote scientific learning.
- Pupils are very effectively managed and exhibited exemplary behaviour during the evaluation. Questionnaire responses indicate that they have very positive attitudes towards school. Through an annual award system, pupils are encouraged to strive for excellence in academic standards, sport and music. There are monthly assemblies to reward senior pupils for attainment, community spirit and effort. Parents are invited to these assemblies. There is a well-established students' council, the members of which are involved in a range of projects. Pupils benefit from a broad programme of curricular and co-curricular activities organised by teachers outside of school time. Teachers are highly commended for their commitment to this work.
- Parents' representatives expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school. Responses to parent questionnaires corroborated this view. The parents' association provides educational and social opportunities for parents through organised talks and quiz nights. The association also operates a very successful annual second hand book sale and uniform 'drop and swap'.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A culture of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very well embedded in the school. Planned development is being pursued in aspects of literacy, numeracy and science in particular. Very effective systems are in place to support this work. Class teams plan and evaluate on a monthly basis. An aspect of professional development is incorporated into these meetings. As well as completing an annual review, all teachers meet individually with either the principal or deputy principal to discuss their class and the aspects of the curriculum covered. Efficient data handling systems are used to analyse pupil progress at individual, class and whole school levels. This analysis is used effectively to inform classroom practice. Comprehensive work has also been undertaken in eliciting the views of parents. Views were sought on pupils' reading, Mathematics, social and personal development, and progress generally. All information gathered feeds into a thorough and comprehensive end of year review.
- All teachers provide long-term and short-term planning and monthly progress reports. Collaborative planning practices are in place. The overall quality of planning ranges from adequate to good and in a minority of settings very good planning was noted. In some settings, learning outcomes are provided in plans, and specific content through which the outcomes will be developed is identified. This approach should be extended. For pupils who present with specific needs, differentiated planning is provided by the mainstream class teachers. Support teachers provide detailed individual education plans (IEPs) which provide a clear outline of content to be covered over the time frame.
- 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 ranges from good to very good and the majority of lessons observed were interesting and engaging. Teachers use a broad range of methodologies and achieve a good balance between whole-class instruction, talk and discussion, pair work and group work. Some teachers share learning outcomes with pupils in advance of lessons. This very effective practice merits extension. ICT is purposefully used in classrooms, particularly for illustrative purposes. Pupils' learning in English and Mathematics is very good overall. Assessment practices are very well embedded at all class levels. Comparative analyses of outcomes from non-verbal reasoning tests and standardised tests in English and Mathematics are an integral part of assessment folders. Teachers were observed to make careful note of whole-class trends in pupils' attainment. Pupils are encouraged to identify their own learning targets from reviewing their work. Very good feedback is provided to pupils in their copy books.
- Múintear an Ghaeilge ar dhóigh choinsiasach agus gabhann idir láidreachtaí agus scóip chun forbartha sa chur chuige teagaisc agus sna leibhéil ghnóthachtála. I gcoitinne cruthaítear comhthéacsanna taitneamhacha chun deiseanna fiúntacha a thabhairt do na daltaí iad féin a chur in iúl, ag baint úsáide as na ceithre scil teanga, éisteacht labhairt, léitheoireacht agus scríbhneoireacht. Mar shampla, cuireadh ar bun scéim na gcairde cainte chun labhairt na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn agus breathnaíodh oilteacht inmholta sa chaint i measc dhaltaí sna bun ranganna agus sna meán ranganna go háirithe. Tá sé tráthúil anois tógáil ar seo agus díriú chomh maith ar fhorbairt scileanna éisteachta. Tá ard caighdeán sroichte ag méid áirithe daltaí ó thaobh líofachta agus cruinneas na léitheoireachta de. Le barr feabhais a bhaint amach sa ghné seo den churaclam d'fhéadfaí an t-eispéireas léitheoireachta a fhairsingiú le húrscéalta agus fíorleabhair. Ó

thaobh na scríbhneoireachta de chonacthas samplaí dea-chleachtais sa scríbhneoireacht phearsanta agus scríbhneoireacht éirítheach arbh fhiú a scaipeadh.

- *Irish is taught conscientiously and both the teaching approach and levels of attainment feature strengths and scope for improvement. In general enjoyable contexts are created to provide the pupils with worthwhile opportunities to express themselves using the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this context a scheme for speaking buddies was introduced to promote spoken Irish and commendable speaking proficiency was noted among pupils in junior and middle classes in particular. It is timely now to build on this and focus also on developing listening skills. Some pupils have achieved a high standard in reading fluency and accuracy. Further improvement of this aspect of the curriculum can be achieved by broadening the reading experience through novels and real books. In terms of writing, good examples of personal and emergent writing were noted and this practice merits extension.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral language skills are developed through discrete oral lessons, talk and discussion across the curriculum and through programmes such as *Aistear* and Geo-literacy. Poetry is well taught and pupils' efforts at writing poetry are of a high standard. Various strategies and programmes are used to promote reading skills. Literacy Lift-Off is very well planned and could be enhanced by wider use of running records. Comprehension strategies are thoroughly taught, novels are used widely and high standards are achieved in spelling. The pupils in senior classes engage in a programme of essay preparation and writing. They are given opportunities to have their work included in an annual publication and on the school website. To provide a more dynamic focus on writing as a social activity in response to particular situations it is recommended that a systematic approach be taken to teaching the genres in writing. Overall, the presentation of written work is good with some scope for improvement in a minority of instances.
- Mathematics is very well taught and pupils' attainment is of a very high standard. Lessons observed incorporated a very good focus on oral and mental Mathematics, a good level of talk and discussion and pupil-pupil interactions. Mathematical language is taught in a thorough manner and concepts are represented pictorially and diagrammatically. Discovery learning is very well facilitated and in the course of this work pupils estimate and reason systematically. The relevance of topics to real-life situations is well explored, giving pupils a solid foundation for the application of mathematical concepts. Cognitive Acceleration in Mathematics Education (CAME) is effectively used to challenge and motivate pupils and get them to think about Mathematics. The school is moving very constructively towards the integration of ICT and Mathematics by giving pupils opportunities to explore problem solving through the use of programming languages such as Scratch.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in SPHE is good. At a whole-school level, there is a good awareness of the significance of SPHE. Good systems are in place to generate appropriate pupil attitudes and a positive school climate and environment. Teachers are very caring and nurturing and pupils benefit accordingly. Whole-school assemblies and reward systems are used to good effect to encourage positive behaviour and interactions. Good strategies, which include circle time, brain storming, pair work and group work, are used in the teaching of SPHE. During the evaluation, when SPHE and English were integrated and where lessons were based on story, it was observed that particularly good outcomes were achieved. In planning for the teaching of SPHE, it is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on integrating SPHE with Drama. This will enable a more in-depth exploration of curriculum strands. It will also allow a deeper study of life topics, themes and human dilemmas through the dramas.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Eight teachers provide support to pupils with high incidence and low incidence learning needs. The organisation of the provision is of a high order and it is reviewed regularly in light of pupils' needs and teachers' observations. Support is provided by withdrawing individual pupils and small groups for support in Mathematics and English. In-class support is provided through team teaching, Literacy Lift-off and the Book Worm Club. A number of pupils also receive appropriate support to learn English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- Teachers' work in supporting pupils is very good. Innovative practice is in evidence. The introduction of early intervention and specific programmes has been successful, being well informed and grounded in good research and assessment. Aspects of the overall success of this work can be attributed to the teachers' involvement and commitment to in-class support. Very good individual education plans (IEPs) are provided for pupils. These contain clear targets which are relevant and appropriate to the pupils' needs. IEPs are reviewed appropriately on a regular basis.
- Admirable support is provided for exceptionally able learners, through differentiation, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and extra work in English and Mathematics.