

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil An Chlochair,
Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath
Roll Number: 20063M**

Date of inspection: 30 January 2013



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

1. Introduction

Scoil An Chlochair National School is a mainstream, co-educational, primary school under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Meath. It caters for children from Kilbeggan and its hinterland. At the time of the evaluation, there were 231 pupils on roll. 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:

- Teachers demonstrate proficient, well-developed teaching skills.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good.
- The principal and staff have made a very good start to school self-evaluation.
- Teachers foster an open relationship with parents and the parents' association provides very valuable support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The in-school management team should lead the review of curricular plans and monitor their implementation.
- Ba chóir go mbeadh cothú chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí mar phríoracht i múineadh na Gaeilge. *The development of pupils' conversational ability should be prioritised in Irish teaching.*
- A greater emphasis should be placed on problem solving in Mathematics.

3. Quality of School Management

- There is scope to improve the management afforded by the board. It meets regularly and considers issues such as enrolment, policy review and school finances. The board should update its child protection policy and revise its enrolment criteria to avoid ambiguity about the order in which places will be allocated in the event of the school being oversubscribed. It is also advised to ensure that procedures are in place for the Garda vetting of school personnel; that its accounts are certified or audited annually; and that it reviews aggregated assessment data from standardised tests annually. An agreed report on each meeting should be disseminated to the school community.
- Effective in-school management structures are in place. The principal demonstrates leadership across the pastoral, administrative and curricular domains. The in-school management team meets regularly and members competently fulfil their assigned duties. Post holders should lead the review of curricular plans and monitor their implementation.

- The parents' association provides very valuable support to the school. It is particularly commended for its involvement in curricular initiatives, such as paired reading. The school is advised to formally involve the parents' association in policy review and development.
- Parents receive good quality information on school procedures and policies. In their responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with a range of issues including discipline and their children's progress. Various means of sharing information with parents for whom English is not their primary language should be explored.
- Throughout the school all pupils are very well behaved and daily routines are capably managed. Pupil attendance levels should be more closely analysed to determine patterns in pupil absences and strategies to deal with such patterns should be implemented as appropriate. Pupil questionnaire responses indicate that pupils get on well together and feel safe within the school.
- Resources are effectively managed. The school is a stimulating print-rich and number-rich environment and all classrooms are well-equipped. An impressive range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources is available, both within classes and in the dedicated ICT room. The school environment is very well maintained. A greater range of equipment is required in order to implement the *Gymnastics* strand of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of administrative plans is very good. All policies are ratified and a clear system of cyclical review is in place. The policy on Relationship and Sexuality Education should be updated and a policy on teacher absence should be devised.
- Whole-school curricular plans are adequate. All plans reflect the principles of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and outline key aspects of subjects. They should be updated to afford clearer guidance on continuity and progression in pupils' learning and to provide a balanced treatment of the strands and strand units of each subject.
- The overall quality of individual teacher planning is good. Most teachers base their short-term plans on curriculum objectives and document learning outcomes in their monthly progress records. This practice should be adopted by all teachers. It is also advised that teachers plan more carefully for the specific language to be taught during Irish and oral English lessons.
- Targets established for pupils with special educational needs should be more specific and measurable.
- Teachers, under the direction of the principal, have made a very good start to school self-evaluation. They have selected a specific sub-theme as the focus of self-evaluation and have commenced data gathering.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification. The school policy on child protection does not yet reflect the requirements of appendix 1 of *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* and procedures are not yet in place for the Garda vetting of school personnel.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Effective teaching is evident within the school. Teachers demonstrate proficient teaching skills; they explain concepts clearly and question pupils carefully. Lessons are well structured and contain a blend of appropriate methodologies. In some cases more frequent opportunities for collaborative, group-based learning and a greater emphasis on differentiation were advised. The consistent implementation of the homework policy is recommended.
- Cé go bhfachtas dea-chleachtas áirithe i dteagasc na Gaeilge, tá gá le hobair shunatasach chun caighdeán Gaeilge na ndaltaí a ardú. Múintear formhór na gceachtanna trí Ghaeilge agus baintear dea-úsáid as fearais chun tacú leis an bhfoghlaim. Tá foclóir áirithe ar eolas ag na daltaí ach téann sé dian orthu an teanga a úsáid. Moltar don scoil béim a chur ar chothú chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí. Ba chóir a chinntiú go mbunófaí na ceachtanna comhrá ar mhúineadh theanga shainiúil. Ní mór an teanga seo a roghnú go cúramach, ullmhúchán críochnúil a dhéanamh dá teagasc agus deiseanna a sholáthar do na daltaí í a úsáid i suímh éagsúla. Chuige sin b'fhiú don scoil clár córasach do mhúineadh na Gaeilge a leagan amach a léiríonn an teanga ba chóir a mhúineadh ag na rangleibhéil éagsúla agus na caighdeáin a mbeifí ag súil leo ó na daltaí.
- *While some good practice was evident in the teaching of Irish, significant work is required to raise pupils' standard of Irish. The majority of lessons are taught through Irish and good use is made of resources to support learning. Pupils have some vocabulary however they experience difficulty using the language. The school is advised to emphasise the development of pupils' conversational ability. Teachers should ensure that conversational lessons are based on the teaching of specific language. This language should be carefully selected, its teaching should be well planned for and pupils should receive opportunities to use it in a variety of settings. In order to achieve this, the school should devise a developmental programme for the teaching of Irish that outlines the language that should be taught at each class level and the standards that pupils are expected to attain.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. All teachers explicitly teach reading skills and very good use is made of differentiated reading groups in many classes. Pupils read a range of material appropriate to their needs and abilities and their results in standardised tests are good. All pupils write in a variety of genres and are familiar with drafting, editing and publishing their written work. Oral language is integral to all class programmes, and some very good examples of extensive oral activities preceding written work were observed. There is scope for further oral language lessons that are informed by specific oral language objectives and that aim to develop pupils' vocabulary and enrich their language.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Teachers place a commendable emphasis on the language of Mathematics and forge clear links between mathematical concepts and pupils' everyday experiences. Concrete resources are well used and some very effective use of group-based learning was observed. The pupils' copies reflect a balanced treatment of all strands and standardised test results are good. Pupils should be enabled to use a range of problem-solving strategies and a greater proportion of their work should be based on problem-solving, including opportunities to work collaboratively to set and solve mathematical problems.
- Very good quality PE lessons were observed. All lessons were correctly structured and utilised a variety of individual work, group work and team play. Skills were explicitly taught and equipment well used. In planning for and implementing the PE programme, teachers

should ensure that adequate attention is afforded to all strands and strand units of the curriculum, including *Gymnastics* and *Understanding and Appreciation*.

- Standardised tests in English and Mathematics and non-reading intelligence are administered annually. A clear system of recording and tabulating assessment data is in place that facilitates the year-on-year tracking of individual pupil's attainments and the comparison between pupils' results in the three tests. This is good practice.
- Effective assessment-of-learning procedures are in place in mainstream classes and support settings. There is scope to further increase the emphasis on assessment for learning, through the use of strategies such as conferencing and self-assessment. The school is advised to devise and implement a practical means of assessing pupil progress in PE, as recommended in the *Physical Education Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines*.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The continuum of support for pupils with special educational needs operates very effectively within the school. Other elements of good practice include the implementation of a specific early-intervention programme and the use of a variety of models of support.
- Very competent teaching was observed in support settings. Affirming pupil-teacher relationships prevailed and lessons were clear, focused and well-resourced.
- Fully appropriate provision is in place for most pupils with low-incidence special educational needs. The school must ensure that appropriate planning and resource-teaching supports are in place for all of these pupils in order to maximise their learning on withdrawal from and within the mainstream class.
- The language needs of some pupils for whom English is an additional language are met through dedicated language classes. Other pupils' language needs are met through their inclusion in learning-support groups. Consideration should be given to meeting these pupils' needs through their inclusion in dedicated language classes or through differentiating the oral language programme in mainstream classes.

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 Scoil an Chlochair, Kilbeggan wish to thank the DES inspectors for the professional manner in which they carried out the Whole School Evaluation. The Inspectors were courteous to and considerate of the management, staff, parents and children when conducting the inspection during January 2013. The report is detailed with many positive comments about management quality of planning and teaching and support throughout. In addition there are observations about improvements that can be made and these have been considered carefully by all the relevant parties.

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

The Board of Management notes the observations made by the inspectors and is already supporting the Principal in implementing the recommendations made. The Board of Management has already adjusted the enrolment policy in line with recommendations and is revising the child protection procedures that are in place. Further consideration of the recommendations surrounding improvements to curricular planning and practice involving management, staff, parents and pupils is also taking place.