

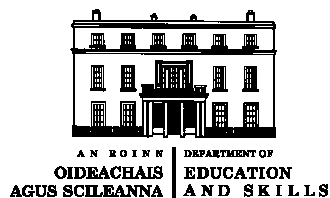
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Cnoc na Naomh National School**  
**Derryconnor, Co. Donegal**

**Roll number: 16671N**

**Date of inspection: 3 October 2013**



## 1. Introduction

Cnoc na Naomh National School is a co-educational, Catholic, Gaeltacht school which functions under the patronage of the bishop of Raphoe. It participates in the school support programme, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). There are 105 pupils on roll in the school and the attendance of a certain number of them needs to be improved. The board of management is advised to continue to develop suitable strategies to promote and sustain regular attendance throughout the school year. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in the curriculum areas of Irish, English, Mathematics and Science. 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:

- The work of the board of management is carried out very effectively.
- The principal teacher works capably and the members of the in-school management team give her commendable support.
- The members of the school staff work co-operatively and effectively.
- The quality of the school planning process is very good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish and English is good and it is very good in the areas of Mathematics and Science.
- The learning environment is organised very attractively throughout the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that co-ordination of the work in Irish and English literacy be made an inherent part of the duties of the holders of posts of responsibility
- It is also recommended that more comprehensive provision be made for the different levels of ability among the pupils and that team teaching be developed and implemented on a whole-school basis.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is carried out very effectively. The board strongly supports the staff of the school in the development of policies and its members display a particular understanding of the quality of the educational provision that is made in the school. Definite priorities are perceptible in the work of the board that give clear guidance in regard to achievable targets. It has carried out commendable work in providing school accommodation and resources of a high standard.
- The principal teacher, who has teaching responsibilities, works professionally and capably and she has a clear understanding of the progress of teaching and learning in

the school. She cultivates a positive working environment throughout the school and she oversees the implementation of the school plan effectively through the practice of instructional leadership. Suitable duties are assigned to members of the in-school management team in accordance with agreed priorities and these duties are fulfilled diligently. It is recommended that co-ordination of the work in Irish and English literacy be made an inherent part of the duties of the holders of posts of responsibility, based on the current targets and needs of the school. It would be of benefit to the in-school management team to undertake curriculum leadership training in order to enhance their skills in this area of their work.

- There are five classroom teachers and a learning support teacher on the teaching staff of the school. The resource teaching service was initiated during the period of evaluation. At that time there was a substitute teacher working in the junior classes. A high standard of Irish is evident among the teaching staff and a lot of emphasis is placed on cultivating Irish culture throughout the school. The special needs assistant provides very effective support for pupils with special learning needs.
- The school building is maintained to a high standard. The learning environment is organised very attractively throughout the school. The work of the pupils in various curriculum areas is displayed on the walls in a motivating manner. A wide range of teaching aids, including information and communications technology equipment (ICT), is available in the school. However, more than half of the pupils indicated in their responses to the questionnaires that were distributed to them during the evaluation that they do not use computers or interactive white boards frequently. The teachers should ensure that the use of ICT is increased in the middle and senior classes so that all of the pupils can benefit from these resources.
- The school makes a good effort to stimulate home school communications by organising annual parent-teacher meetings and other meetings when necessary. The input and participation of the school community is welcomed in various extra-curricular activities that enhance the ethos and culture of the school. The majority of the parents indicated in the questionnaires that were distributed to them that they felt that the school welcomes parents but a high number of them thought that it does not seek parents' opinions frequently in regard to school matters. It is recommended to the board of management that the participation of parents in the development of school policies be strengthened. It would also be worth establishing a parents' committee.
- The pupils conduct themselves in a mannerly way and they set to work on tasks without difficulty. According to the outcomes from the questionnaires, the majority of them were of the view that their school is a good one. More than half of them indicated that they do not often work in groups. Worthwhile practices are used in organising co-operative work in certain curriculum areas and an extension of the use of these practices to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in particular should prove to be beneficial.

#### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of the school planning process is very good. A wide range of policies and plans has been formulated co-operatively and they have been approved by the board of management. This planning provides the work of the school with useful guidance.
- The quality of classroom planning is satisfactory overall. The long-term planning of the teachers is suitable in regard to teaching objectives and to the content of lessons. In the case of short-term planning, however, it is recommended that more comprehensive provision be made for differences in the levels of pupil ability and that planning for team teaching be expanded on a whole-school basis. The progress of the work is suitably

recorded month by month and emphasis is placed on the skills and concepts which the pupils have learned. In order to add value to the monthly progress records it is recommended that the targets that have been reached as a result of learning activities, which have been completed within intervention programmes based on the self-evaluation process at every class level, be made clear.

- The self-evaluation process in the school has got off to a creditable start and a plan for the implementation of priorities has been set out. The quality of the pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy is subjected to annual whole-school analysis. This good practice is acknowledged but the development of an action plan for intervention based on the results of attainment tests in Irish and English literacy would be worthwhile, particularly in the middle classes.
- 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 quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. A start has been made on teaching a graded programme in the junior classes that is in accord with the best principles of immersion education. Vocabulary is taught in a sure manner and listening skills are being developed effectively. The pupils' comprehension of the language is good in the middle and senior classes but their ability to communicate through this medium requires further development. A commendable start has been made on the development of their reading vocabulary in the middle classes and the majority of the pupils in the middle and senior classes read with expression and at an appropriate pace. Writing is approached in an effective way and examples of the pupils' work in their copybooks show that they are given ample opportunities to write in a range of genres under the guidance of the teacher. The pupils recite a wide collection of rhymes, poems and songs enthusiastically and with understanding.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Regular discussion and vocabulary enrichment opportunities are provided in the classrooms. However, there should be a more systematic whole-school approach to the development of the pupils' oral language skills. In the junior classes, reading is taught effectively using appropriate programmes. In the middle classes, there is a need to employ more effective strategies to promote pupils' reading and comprehension abilities. The majority of pupils in the senior classes attain a good standard of reading in terms of fluency and understanding. However, a wider range of literature should be used. The standard of writing across the school is commendable. A whole-school approach to the writing process would further enhance progress in this area.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. A fruitful mathematical learning environment is provided in the classrooms and regular use is made of concrete materials to facilitate learning. Very beneficial emphasis is placed on the language of Mathematics and on oral work while content is reinforced and revised regularly. The ability of the majority of the pupils in every class to solve problems is good with a number of pupils reaching a very high standard. The written work of most of the pupils is neat and useful monitoring of the work in their copybooks is carried out. Pupils use calculators to solve simple mathematical questions but it would be of benefit to set out a definite plan for their use.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. The teachers place emphasis on science concepts and on *designing and making*. They make

use of the local environment as the starting point for their lessons. It is evident that the pupils in the junior classes, in particular, undertake experimental work willingly. The school is a participant in the Green Flag Programme and numerous projects have been completed as a result. Commendable work has been done on developing a school garden and the teachers make profitable use of it to teach aspects of science.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good overall. Use is made of very effective teaching methods in some of the classes and it would be worth extending these practices to all classes. Greater emphasis should be placed on collaborative participation in the learning in some classrooms.
- The standard of assessment in the school is good and a start has been made on self-assessment by the pupils. Standardised assessment, spelling tests, dictation exercises and other forms of continuous assessment are carried out on the work of the pupils. In order to add to this work, it is recommended that greater use be made of assessment tools. The pupils' Irish language skills should be assessed in accordance with the content of *Irish Language Indicators* and use should be made of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* to measure their ability in English. It is further recommended that assessment results be used to advance differentiated learning in the classroom.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The learning support service in the school is functioning effectively. The teachers work together gainfully in setting out learning targets in the individual learning plans and the progress of the pupils is reviewed regularly and recorded in a suitable manner. The teaching is well structured and the learning outcomes for the pupils are commendable.
- Resource teaching for pupils with specific learning needs is provided for a period of six hours per week. Individual teaching programmes are being developed co-operatively containing specific learning targets. Although there is a policy on pupils with specific learning needs in the school, it needs to have a graded approach to their education as well as strategies for in-class support, based on their needs, clearly set out in it. Further discussion should take place on the system that is in place for making decisions regarding the provision of additional support for pupils, particularly in the area of literacy.
- The school participates in the Language Assistants Scheme that is funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This support is provided for a period of fifteen hours per week. A review of the assistant's input in the context of the school plan should be carried out when in-class team teaching methods are being extended to all classes in Irish.
- A very friendly atmosphere is created in the school and it makes very good provision for the various needs of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school's book rental scheme is operated in a beneficial way.

*Published January 2014*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

*(This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management)*

### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management is happy and encouraged by this report. The report reflects the board's view that there is a good standard of education provided in the school; that the Principal is hardworking and that she is an effective leader; that the teachers and assistants are capable and zealous and that they work as a team that co-operates very well with one another. The evaluation and report clarified the duties and responsibilities of members of the board. It is heartening for the board to know that the majority of pupils and parents are satisfied with the school. The board is very happy that the evaluation and the report supported the board's strong policy towards the language, the Irish culture and immersion in this all-Irish, Gaeltacht school. The board welcomes the recommendations made in the report and it will make every effort to act on the recommendations regarding attendance, posts of responsibility, the use of computers and calculators, the involvement of parents, group-work and team-teaching approaches, communication abilities of pupils, assessment and self-assessment; provision for varying abilities etc. We understand that we have many challenges ahead.

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

1. The in-school management accepted the recommendation that the co-ordination of literacy in Irish and English would be made an inherent part of the duties of the holders of posts of responsibility. An intervention action plan has been devised.

As part of the plan:

- (a) Station teaching has commenced in Irish and English in the middle classes in November 2013 and this approach will be extended to other classes in the months ahead. The parents are and will be participating/actively engaged in this approach. The groups for the stations are organised based on the results of Micra (English) and Drumcondra (Irish).
- (b) We are undertaking the development of communication in both languages by using conversation, posters, pictures in each class.
- (c) It is in the plan that the assessment '*Language Indicators in Irish*' and '*Drumcondra English Profiles*' will be used to assess the varying abilities of pupils as recommended by the inspector. The programme '*Building Bridges of Understanding*' is used and the Deputy Principal provided the suitable books for this programme. The books are in use in each class.

2. In the teachers monthly progress reports, the targets that have been reached as a result of learning activities, which have been completed within intervention programmes at every class level are recorded more clearly and this is also done in the teachers' short-term planning.

3. A parents committee was established in November 2013.

4. The board will make every effort through the school's attendance policy to continue to promote good attendance. A letter was issued to parents at the beginning of the school year to inform them about the importance of daily school attendance and explaining the 20 day rule again.

5. The input of the language assistant in the context of the Irish plan was reviewed and she is participating in the in-class team teaching approach now.
6. The staff accepts the inspector's recommendation that there should be a definite plan for the use of calculators in the school's mathematics plan. Calculators are in use under the direction of the teachers from 4<sup>th</sup> class upwards.
7. With regard to the use of the interactive whiteboard, there is no proper internet connection due to where the school is situated. The teachers currently download material at home. The board has contacted an expert to seek advice so that the interactive whiteboard will be in use on a regular basis.



