

A Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Iognáid, Raleigh Row
Galway
Uimhir rolla: 19371Q**

Date of inspection: 14 March 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Iognáid is an all-Irish, Jesuit, co-educational primary school. It is situated in the city of Galway. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway. There are twenty-eight teachers on the staff, twenty-one of them in the mainstream classes and seven learning-support and resource teachers. There are 567 pupils enrolled at present. The attendance record of the majority of pupils is very good. 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.

A whole-school evaluation was carried out in the school in March 2013. This evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and History. Teaching and learning were observed in the classes of a sample of fifteen teachers in the school during this evaluation.

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 gives commendable support to the school.
- The newly appointed principal is competent and diligent in her work.
- There is a positive learning atmosphere in this all-Irish school and the management of pupils is good.
- The teachers are diligent in developing the skills of pupils and in motivating them to learn.
- A good standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evident in a broad range of curricular areas.
- The parents participate actively and productively in school affairs.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the duties of teachers on the in-school management team be reviewed.
- It is recommended that an agreement should be reached as a staff on various school matters, for example classroom planning.
- It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on evaluation on assessment on a whole-school basis and that more detailed analysis be made of the results of standardised tests.
- It is recommended that the variety of teaching methods used be expanded. For example, it would be worthwhile practising group-teaching methods more frequently and expanding in-class support.

3. Quality of School Management

- The Board of Management functions in accordance with the rules of the Department of Education and Skills. The Board appropriately addresses relevant management issues. Board meetings are convened regularly throughout the year. Specific tasks are allocated to the Board of Management members. The treasurer presents regular reports on financial matters to the Board. Financial accounts are certified annually, as required under the Education Act (1998).
- A new principal was appointed to the school in September 2012. The principal has made a very good start in the position. She discharges her administrative and organisational duties capably and diligently, and she demonstrates commendable leadership skills. Her vision for the school is that it would develop as a centre in which each pupil receives a broad and balanced education.
- The deputy principal and the other teachers on the in-school management team assist the principal in the day-to-day management of the school. It is recommended, however, that a regular review be carried out of these teachers' duties in the context of the school's identified priorities, particularly in curricular matters.
- There is an appropriate stock of educational resources available in the school. Effective use is made of the interactive white board in a great number of classes, to enhance the teaching and learning process. The work of the secretary, and that of the cleaners, contributes to the smooth functioning of the school. The maintenance of the school building and grounds is effectively managed. Particular praise is due to the special needs assistants for the work they do both inside and outside the classroom, for the pupils under their care and for the school in general.
- There is an active parents' association in the school. Parents participate fully in the life of the school and they support the school in curricular matters and in extra-curricular activities, including sports and arts activities. There is regular communication between the school and parents, and notes, newsletters and messages are sent to parents on a regular basis. A parent-teacher meeting is organised annually. Parents receive a written report on the progress of their children at the end of each school year. In their responses to a questionnaire distributed as part of the whole-school evaluation, a substantial number of parents indicated that there is a good atmosphere in the school, that the teaching is good and that the school helps the social and personal development of pupils.
- The management of pupils in this school is good. An agreeable learning atmosphere is to be discerned throughout the whole school and the pupils at each class level work diligently. They are self-confident and knowledgeable about the content covered. As indicated in their responses to questionnaires, the pupils consider this to be a good school, that they get on well with other pupils in the school and that they feel safe and secure in the classroom and in the playground.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. A coherent school plan has been compiled containing a broad range of administrative and curricular policies. Since the new principal took up duty, a comprehensive, systematic review of the various policies has begun.

- A praiseworthy emphasis is placed on school self-evaluation and the school is reflecting, in a worthwhile way, on how to develop various aspects of education. A development plan has been drawn up by the school on administrative and curriculum matters. This sets out the priorities agreed by the staff and the activities that need to be implemented to reach the targets set. The views of parents and pupils are taken into account in this work.
- All the teachers provide suitable written planning for each curricular area. Much of this planning is very good. It would be worthwhile, however, discussing classroom planning on a whole-school basis to co-ordinate planning and curriculum implementation more effectively throughout the school. As a central element of this, it is recommended that monthly progress records be reviewed and that agreement be reached among the staff on how these should be maintained and used as an assessment tool.
- The school authorities confirmed 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 and learning is good throughout the school. Much of the teaching and learning is of a high standard. The majority of pupils have a very good knowledge of the work done in the various subjects. A range of effective teaching strategies is evident in a whole-class context. It is now recommended that the good practice of differentiation observed in many of the teaching settings be extended across the whole school. As part of this, it would be worthwhile giving pupils more frequent opportunities of working together in groups and in pairs.
- Emphasis is placed on assessment throughout the school. All teachers regularly monitor pupils' written work. Efforts are made to ensure that support is provided for those pupils who need it. To assist with this work, however, each teacher should have an assessment folder to maintain records on the progress of individual pupils. The results of standardised tests are monitored with reference to individual pupils. It is now recommended that a more detailed analysis be made of these results on a whole-school basis and that the results be used to promote assessment for learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good throughout the school. Some of the work observed is excellent and the standard of Irish among the pupils in these classes is very praiseworthy. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the systematic development of specific oral and listening skills at each class level. Accuracy in pronunciation and grammar matters are emphasised in a positive manner in the majority of classes, although these could be given a greater emphasis in some classes. The standard of reading of the pupils is good in overall, although it is recommended that the structure of reading lessons be reviewed in some classes. It would also be advisable to make a broader range of reading materials available. The standard of writing of the majority of pupils is good. It would worthwhile giving pupils more regular opportunities to practise creative writing.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Appropriate emphasis is placed on discussion and oral-language development. While the recitation, performance and writing of poetry are good in most classes, there is a need to give more attention to this work in some classes. Almost all pupils attain a good standard in reading. The school

contains a good range of books. It is recommended, however, that a better balance be achieved between the use of the school library and class libraries. This should provide pupils with easier access to a wider selection of books. Very good examples of writing are to be found at each class level. It is recommended, however, that pupils be given more opportunities to develop their creative writing skills.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Very effective work is to be seen in some classes. An appropriate emphasis is placed on discussion and on oral Mathematics. Facts and concepts are taught systematically in the majority of classes and effective use is regularly made of concrete materials to inculcate concepts in these classes. Posters and mathematical equipment are on display and in use in the classrooms to enhance the teaching and learning process. It is recommended, however, that greater emphasis be placed on mental work and on differentiation in Mathematics lessons. It would also be worthwhile giving greater attention to problem solving and providing opportunities for pupils to work together in Mathematics.
- The quality of the work done in History is good. Much of the practice is very good and it is clear that the pupils' skills as historians are developed and that they study a variety of topics. An appropriate emphasis is placed on stories in the junior classes. Praiseworthy projects on historical themes have been completed by the senior classes. Appropriate vocabulary is developed by the teachers and emphasis is placed on enhancing pupils' understanding of various aspects of History. Teaching aids are regularly used to enhance the learning process. It is recommended that further opportunities be given to pupils to work in groups to further develop their evaluative and analytical skills.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils in the school is good. The pupils come a variety of Irish and international backgrounds.
- The quality of communication between pupils and teachers in the learning support and resource service is good. Some of the teaching methods used in these setting are very good. It is recommended, however, that in-class support be further developed to assist pupils in their own classrooms.
- Planning in the learning-support and resource service is varied. While much of the planning in the service is very good, there is scope for development in some of the planning in these settings. More detail is required in some of the planning and the layout of the various documents needs to be reviewed. It is recommended that the support team decide on an agreed system of planning for the whole service. As a central element of this, it is recommended that agreement be reached on the layout of individual educational plans (IEPs), and on the learning-support programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs, as well as on the progress records of these pupils.