

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

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Gaelscoil Inse Chór**  
**Islandbridge, Dublin 8**  
**Roll No. 19589U**

**Date of Inspection: 14 April 2015**



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

## 1. Introduction

Gaelscoil Inse Chór is located in Islandbridge in Dublin 8. It is a co-educational all-Irish school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. At present, there are 244 pupils on the rolls and in general the attendance of the majority of the pupils is very good. The board of management of the school 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 conclusions and recommendations for further development

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

- The members of the board of management support the school well and they are committed to the development of the school.
- The principal fosters a positive atmosphere amongst the school community and he places praiseworthy emphasis on continuous professional development of the teaching staff for the benefit of the life and development of the school.
- The parents' association gives good support to the school and parents are active in various aspects of school life.
- The school staff are diligent and the interest they show in the overall development and progress of the pupils is highly commended.
- The good behaviour of the pupils, their interest and their engagement are praiseworthy.
- The quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good practice.
- It is clear that the pupils have an appreciation for Irish and worthwhile strategies are being implemented to promote the language; immersion education and Aistear are part of these.

The following **main-recommendations** are made:

- The curriculum leadership of the principal and the in-school management team should be developed further, and attention should be directed to the continuous development of teaching and learning in consultation with the school staff.
- To ensure continuity in learning and consistency, it is recommended that an agreed system for planning should be established with emphasis on clear learning objectives and on differing pupils' abilities.
- It is recommended that a systematic, spiral programme for Irish, with benchmarks for certain skills at each class level, and extra emphasis should be placed on the teaching and on the use of Irish during each lesson.
- It is recommended that a wider range assessment tools should be used and that the results of the assessment should be used systematically to cater for the difference in the pupils' abilities and to add to differentiation in the class.

### **3. The quality of school management**

- The members of the board of management support the school well and they are committed to the development of the school. It is to be commended that they operate through the medium of Irish.
- The principal fosters a positive atmosphere amongst the school community and he places praiseworthy emphasis on continuous professional development of the teaching staff for the benefit of the life and development of the school. The members of the in-school management team carry out their assigned duties diligently. It is praiseworthy that all teachers take on a range of additional curricular and extra-curricular tasks for the benefit of the pupils. The curriculum leadership of the principal and the in-school management team should be developed further, and attention should be directed to the continuous development of teaching and learning in consultation with the teachers.
- There is a wide range of teaching facilities available in the classrooms and generally they are being used effectively. The library will enhance the pupils' experience in Irish and English literacy. The whole staff is to be highly commended for showing an interest in the holistic development of the pupils.
- The parents' association gives good support to the school and parents are active in various aspects of school life. There is regular contact between the school and the parents and they are kept informed effectively. The questionnaires show that almost all of the parents feel that there is a good atmosphere in the school and are happy with the school.
- The good behaviour of the pupils, their interest and their engagement in lessons is praiseworthy. The questionnaires show that the majority of the pupils feel safe at school and that they think that this is a good school. The strategies which are being implemented to try to promote the use of Irish in the yard are commendable and the pupils' input into school life is developed through their participation on the Irish language and the *Green Schools* committees.

### **4. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation**

- The administration policies guide the work and organisation of the school. Curriculum plans should now be reviewed to ensure that there is an emphasis in them on pupil learning, and that they guide the practice in the classrooms.
- There is variety in the standard and effectiveness of individual teacher planning and monthly progress records. To ensure consistency and continuity in learning, it is recommended that an agreed system for planning and monthly recording of progress should be established with emphasis on clear learning objectives and on differing pupils' abilities. Special emphasis should be placed on the development of skills in Irish across the curriculum.
- A credible start has been made with school self-evaluation. Worthwhile analysis is carried out on standard test results and appropriate priorities have been identified. In order to ensure that this process has an impact on teaching and learning, there clear goals should be set with definite actions, and a monitoring system should be implemented.

- Confirmation was provided by the school authorities 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

- On the whole the quality of teaching and learning is good. Where very good practice exists, the teaching programme is adapted to suit the different abilities of the pupils, the learning goals are shared with the pupils and worthwhile emphasis is being put on development of Irish across the curriculum. This practice should be implemented regularly in every class. In order to develop the learning experience and achievement of the pupils, the Irish language standard of the pupils should be developed systematically throughout the school in order to ensure that pupils are able to engage with the curriculum at a more suitable level.
- There is variety in the assessment methods used throughout the school. Some of the teachers keep a record of progress in various aspects of the curriculum and they use the results of the assessment effectively as a guide for their teaching. In some classes a good start has been made with developing the pupils' self-assessment skills. An agreed approach to assessment should be implemented to cater for the variety in pupil ability and to improve differentiation in the class. In particular, Irish language skills should be assessed using the *Próifílí Measúnachta don Ghaeilge system*.
- A positive atmosphere is created for Irish learning and culture, and it is clear that the children have respect for the language. Pupil learning and achievement in Irish varies. Even though good practice is observed in some classes in which definite material is taught including vocabulary, phrases and structures, and in which real communication opportunities are promoted regularly, the speaking skills of some pupils are limited and their speech on the whole lacks accuracy. The teachers have identified this as a current challenge and some worthwhile strategies are being implemented, including immersion education, Aistear and a plan for language functions. This is a very positive step.
- In order to improve the richness of pupils' language in Irish, it is recommended that a more systematic programme for the speaking of the language should be followed and the good practice in the school should be spread. The majority of pupils read fluently and with appropriate accuracy, and in certain classes praiseworthy emphasis is placed on the teaching of reading skills in a formal way. It would be worthwhile to widen this good practice throughout the school and to promote regular independent reading. Commendable emphasis is placed on early writing and a spelling scheme is used to good effect in some classes. It is now recommended that a systematic programme be implemented for the development of different writing genres, and pupils throughout the school should be provided with opportunities to engage in free writing or personal writing on a regular basis.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is good with some very good work evident. Appropriate emphasis is placed on oral-language development in most classrooms and many pupils express themselves with suitable confidence. There is good use of novels in most settings. Further work on the development of comprehension skills is advised on a whole school basis. In writing, some commendable projects such as 'Write a Book' promote interest in writing and the development of pupils' editing skills. The recently introduced school spelling scheme is proving beneficial. To improve the quality of pupil written work, a whole-school systematic approach to the writing process across a range of genres is recommended.

- In general, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Good use is made of concrete material and active learning methods in most of the classes and concepts are explained clearly. The schools development priority this year is to develop the pupils' problem solving skills and worthwhile work is ongoing in a number of classes. In order to improve these skills further, it is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on the development of mental Maths, on the composing and solving of practical problems and on the teaching of the language of Mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the Visual Arts is good. The pupils' creativity is fostered in a suitable manner and it is clear that they enjoy to be working with different materials. They are provided with opportunities to reflect on the work of the famous artists and the good practice in the area of looking and responding should be widened on a whole school basis.

#### **6. The quality of pupil support**

- The quality of provision for pupils with special needs is good. Appropriate use is made of a range of teaching strategies including worthwhile in-class support. In order to gain the maximum benefit from this collaborative work, clearer learning goals should be set out.
- Individual learning plans are drafted with appropriate partnership. This good practice is praiseworthy. In some learning programmes, the learning objectives are clear, but in others the objectives are very general. Specific learning goals should be set out based on assessment results, and pupil achievement should be assessed on a continuous basis.
- The policy for special education should now be discussed and reviewed. Wider support needs to be made available for Irish throughout the school. The work that is being done on the staged approach to support of pupils' should be developed.

*Published November 2015*

# **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 is truly thankful for the work that was put into this school evaluation and positively accepts the report that followed. The process was welcomed, as we were aware of the time span between this and the last school evaluation that was completed here.

We are very happy with the positive recognition that is clear in the report for our pupils, our parents/guardians and the teachers of this school.

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

There has been much discussion on the recommendations given to us.

- **Curriculum Leadership**  
The middle management team and the principal have already taken steps in this regard, focusing on the various strands of Irish for the year ahead. There will be a focus on supporting teachers in planning and in encouraging pupils throughout the year. They will be doing regular reports based on these strands and discussed at staff meetings. The subject will be changed each year but the emphasis will remain on the leadership on the strands for whatever subject is in question.
- **Planning**  
The school staff has now agreed a template for short term planning that emphasises differentiation and distinctive learning objectives. This template will be reviewed every year but the same template will be used by us all. There will be opportunities for team-planning – focusing on teachers supporting each other.
- **Irish**  
It has been decided by the school staff to do the following:
  1. To put a more thorough emphasis on the *Séideán Sí* scheme throughout the whole school.
  2. To start the *Céad Céimeanna in Irish* scheme as a support for writing
  3. To place an emphasis on language in all lessons across the curriculum, that the new language will be a central aspect of all lessons.
  4. There will be a focus on the development of ongoing in-class learning support for Irish as language one for pupils from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- **Assessment**  
Contact has been made with the Special Education Support Service in relation to assessment instruments, and we hope that that they will be with us soon. Along with this, the school learning support team have contacted other Gaelscoileanna to seek advice in relation to best practice.