

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT**

**S.N. Rónáin
An Trá Bán, Leitir Móir, Co. Galway**

Roll Number: 14724V

Date of inspection: 8 April 2011



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

This is a translation of the original report which was written in Irish

1. Introduction

S.N. Ronáin is a two-teacher Gaeltacht school, situated in the village of Trá Bhán on the south west coast of Garumna Island. Pupils are fluent in Irish when they enrol in the school. The school was built, under a flat roof, in 1962 and the building now needs to be completely renovated. There is a small yard at the back of the school, and an Astro-turf playing field beside the school which is used by local people and the Irish college outside of school hours. The school operates, with grants and a co-ordinator, under the *DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)* disadvantaged scheme. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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, the principal and staff are commended on the comprehensive educational programme provided by the school through the medium of Irish.
- The partners are also commended on the emphasis currently placed on raising literacy and numeracy standards in the school.
- The quality of resource and pupil management is very good. A positive, creative atmosphere pervades the school and pupils are highly self-confident.
- The quality of communication between school and home is very good and parents are satisfied with the work of the school.
- The quality of school self-evaluation is good in general. The influence of school-planning is evident in the daily work of the school and progress is regularly assessed by staff.
- The standard of teaching and learning is good. The teachers make productive use of an extensive, effective range of teaching methodologies and resources in their work.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that aspects of the school plan, as specified in this report, be reviewed in order to ensure excellence in the functioning of the school. It is further recommended that an expenditure management plan be devised for the proposed school renovation, to ensure the control of spending.
- It is recommended that learning support and resource teachers' schemes be reviewed, in order to formally integrate a module on pupils' personal development in the programme. It is also necessary to allocate time to able pupils on their timetables, so as to strengthen curricular differentiation.
- It is recommended that the school's approach to assessment be reviewed through the use of the analytical software available for the standardised tests used. It is further recommended that the DEIS template be used to guide the strategies for raising standards in the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of management in this school is good. The board is commended on the support it affords school staff and other parties in creating a stimulating learning environment. Duties are prudently allocated, control of spending is ensured and school plans and policies are ratified.
- There is a need to completely renovate the school building and yard, and monies have been sanctioned for this purpose under the summer works scheme of the Department of Education and Skills . It is recommended that the board devise a management plan for the proposed renovation.
- The educational vision for this school entails the provision of education in right, in justice and in equality, for all pupils, with courage, confidence and pride. Every effort is made to realise this vision. It is now necessary to review some of the school policies, including the enrolment policy and the policy on upgrading staff skills, so that they conform to legislation and to best practice.
- The permanent principal attended the various pre-evaluation meetings, although she is presently on maternity leave. The school has a deputy principal, a full-time substitute and an effective support team. They create a pleasant, challenging learning environment and ensure that on-going school activities are well ordered and developed.
- The quality of resource management is good. An extensive range of resources is available for each class which are productively used. It would be worthwhile providing on-going investment for library books and for technology in the school.
- The quality of communication between school and home is good. Parents are welcome to the school during the year to discuss their children's education and formal meetings are convened to share recorded information with them. It is clear from questionnaires, administered to parents in the course of the evaluation, that they are satisfied with the work of the school and with their children's progress.
- The quality of pupil management is good. Pupils are mannerly and courteous towards visitors and one another and are stimulated by school work.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the planning process is good. A wide range of policies were developed by the staff over the years. All policies are based on the context of the school but a review date should be specified on them. It is now recommended that parental involvement in the process of policy review be promoted.
- Staff members are commended on the initiative to improve standards in literacy and numeracy currently under way. It would be worthwhile including this process as part of established procedures under the DEIS scheme, making use of the appropriate templates and of the standard analysis software available for tests.
- It is also commendable that pupils with special needs are fully integrated in the work of the school and they are making very good progress accordingly.

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was also provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in the school is good. Pupils' skills are continuously cultivated through lesson content. There is effective participation in regional and national projects to reinforce pupils' interest and to promote parental involvement. There is a proper emphasis in all lessons on the cultivation of skills in both languages and on vocabulary development. Staff members are commended on their diligence in their work.
- The standard and fluency of Irish in the school is excellent. Pupils have an extensive vocabulary store and can discuss a variety of topics with fluency. The accuracy and richness of language are commendable. The standards of reading and writing are also very good. There is an emphasis on developing higher-order thinking skills and an understanding of syntax and communication skills are fostered in the process. It would be worthwhile investing on an on-going basis in the library book stock and in educational technology, in order to further enhance pupils' experience of school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English in the school is good. Varied and creative lessons were observed in all classrooms. Appropriate emphasis is placed on vocabulary development and communication skills, and an emphasis on phonics and rhymes supports early literacy skills. Big books and class novels are very well utilised and trips to the public library in An Cheathrú Rua are regularly organised for pupils. Language charts are effectively used, the whole-school plan for writing is implemented and continuous assessment of pupils' work is undertaken.
- The quality of teaching in Mathematics is good. A structured programme is implemented, with an on-going emphasis on mental work, computer games, problem solving and the development of terminology. Commendable use is made of concrete materials, of technology and of the school environment in consolidating conceptual understanding. The participation of all pupils is ensured through team teaching in the course of mathematical play.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the Visual Arts is good. The curricular strands are covered and there is an emphasis on integration with all curricular areas. It is commendable that manual dexterity and the traditional arts are included in the programme. Pupils can discuss and debate the material created and their use of terminology, the links with other curricular areas and the vocabulary used during the discussion were noteworthy.
- There is scope for improvement in the school's approach to assessment. Standardised and diagnostic tests, together with informal assessments, are used to measure the development and progress of pupils. The staff has begun to analyse standardised test results with the aid of technological software and it is recommended that these results be used to guide the learning programme and the improvement of standards. It is now

recommended that pupil learning profiles be compiled and that the results of standardised tests be collected according to classes on an on-going basis, in order to record the attainments of individual pupils and to identify deficiencies in the school.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- A policy of equality of access has been productively promoted in the school. The quality of learning outcomes and the progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Individual learning programmes are drawn up for pupils with special needs. Class teachers, learning support and resource teachers, the special needs assistant and parents participate in the process. It is recommended that a copy of each learning programme be issued to the relevant parents.
- Learning support is provided in English and Mathematics in the school. The special needs team functions effectively in mainstream classes, as well as in the learning support classrooms. It is recommended that the learning support and resource teachers' schemes be reviewed, with a view to providing continuing support for able pupils and to incorporating additional modules on the cultivation of application and on changing the learning characteristics of pupils.
- A DEIS coordinator works in the school one half-day per week. She has cultivated very good relations with the relevant parties and a programme for transferring pupils to second-level schools has been devised for parents and pupils. The '*Fun with Maths*' and reading buddies projects implemented at present are also commended.