

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

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

**Scoil Neasáin,**  
**Harmonstown, Dublin 5.**  
**Roll Number: 19309L**

**Date of inspection: 27 May 2011**



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

## 1. Introduction

Scoil Neasáin is a co-educational all-Irish school. It is a Catholic school which is under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. The pupils come to the school from the surrounding area in Dublin 5 and from thirty-five different parishes. There are 247 pupils enrolled in the school.

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:

- Every member of the school community co-operates very effectively for the good of the school and of the pupils.
- The best of attention is paid to the fostering of Irish and a happy atmosphere is cultivated whereby respect of and regard for the heritage and the culture of Ireland are promoted.
- The board of management functions effectively and the members play a central role in the life of the school.
- The dynamic leadership of the principal has a very positive influence on every aspect of the work of the school and she receives willing co-operation from the in-school management team.
- A high standard of teaching is observed in the school and the attainment of the pupils in the subjects that were evaluated is commendable.
- Support is made available to pupils with additional learning needs in an understanding and suitable manner.
- The pupils are commended for their courtesy and for the enthusiastic part they play in the learning activities and in the life of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It would be worthwhile to do formal testing of Irish and in this regard *Assessment Profiles for Irish in Gaeltacht and all-Irish Schools*, by Gearóid Ó Siaghail and Cristin Déiseach, is recommended.
- It is recommended that the board allocates teachers according to the schedule for the supply and appointment of staff ( Circular 0021/2010)

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The board displays diligence in its administration of the school. The members play an active part in the life of the school. Meetings are held regularly and minutes are carefully maintained. The board plays a central role in the whole-school planning process.
- Parents are welcomed in this school. A great effort is made to communicate regularly with the school community and in this respect a newsletter is published regularly. The use that is made of various media to make contact with the school community is commendable, for example the school website, social network sites and text messages. The progress of the pupils is discussed with parents at annual meetings.
- The principal displays great ability in the leadership and in the administration of the school. She undertakes her work professionally and she directs a knowledgeable attention to learning matters and to the provision for pupils. The in-school management team works very effectively, they meet together very often and they succeed very well in organising and promoting curricular matters, pastoral matters and school events.
- A wide range of learning aids has been provided by the school authorities. At present, a class teacher is functioning as a classroom support teacher. This teacher has particular responsibilities which relate to early literacy, physical training and activities with infant classes throughout the entire school year. As a result of the role which this class teacher has, the number of pupils in every mainstream class is greater than the maximum number recommended by the Department. It is recommended that the board allocates teachers according to the schedule for the supply and appointment of staff (Circular 0021/2010).
- It is obvious that the pupils in this school are very happy and co-operative and there is a very positive relationship between the pupils and teachers. A happy, positive atmosphere is observed in the school and the replies of pupils to questionnaires indicate that a large majority of them consider “that this is a good school”.

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

- The quality of the whole-school planning is of a high level. Comprehensive planning is done for every aspect of school administration and for the curriculum. An action plan is provided for every school year. This ensures that every aspect of whole-school planning is considered regularly. The emphasis placed on specific targets and the arrangements made to achieve them are commendable. The school places significant emphasis on regular self-evaluation.
- The teachers prepare long-term and short-term schemes to direct the learning. The long-term schemes are comprehensive and clear. Suitable emphasis is placed on the development of learning objectives and activities. It would be worthwhile to make stronger reference to differentiation in the short-term schemes. Comprehensive monthly records are maintained on the section of curriculum taught.
- 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 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

- Tá ardchaighdeán le sonrú i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaím na Gaeilge. Ón tosach, díritear aird ar chruinneas agus ar shaibhreas teanga a chruthú. Tríd an scoil leantar cláir theagaisc atá dea-struchtúrtha agus grádaithe. Baintear feidhm as raon inmholta de mhodhanna múinte agus cuirtear neart fearais ar fáil chun rannpháirtíocht na ndaltaí uile a éascú. Moltar an raon fearais a dhearann na hoidí chun cur leis an mhúinteoireacht agus chun tacú leis an bhfoghlaím. Sonraítear dul chun cinn céimniúil á dhéanamh ag na daltaí thar na snáitheanna curaclaim uile. Tá caighdeán líofachta an-chreidiúnach ag na daltaí i ngach rang agus is féidir leo labhairt go leanúnach faoi théamaí éagsúla. Tá raon leathan rann, filíocht agus amhrán ar eolas acu. Tá stór maith leabhar i ngach rangseomra agus i leabharlann na scoile. Cuirtear le cumas scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí go héifeachtach. Scríobhann siad go cumasach i seánraí éagsúla agus cuireann a saothar scríbhneoireachta le tarraingteacht na dtaispeántas sna seomraí ranga. B'fhiú tástáil fhoirmiúil don Ghaeilge a dhéanamh agus chuige seo moltar *Próifíilí Measúnachta don Ghaeilge sna Scoileanna Gaeltachta agus Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge* le Gearóid Ó Siaghail agus Cristín Déiseach.
- *A high standard is observed in the teaching and learning of Irish. From the start, attention is directed to developing language accuracy and richness. Throughout the school, teaching programmes which are well structured and graded are followed. A commendable range of teaching methods is employed and plenty of equipment is provided to facilitate the participation of all the pupils. The range of equipment made by the teachers to aid the teaching and to support the learning is commended. It is observed that progressive advancement is being made by the pupils over all curricular strands. The pupils in all classes have a very creditable standard of fluency and they are able to talk with continuity about various themes. They know a wide range of rhymes, poetry and song. There is a good supply of books in all classrooms and in the school library. The writing ability of the pupils is enhanced effectively. They write capably in various genres and their writing samples add to the attractiveness of the presentations in the classrooms. It would be worthwhile to do formal testing of Irish and in this regard Assessment Profiles for Irish in Gaeltacht and all-Irish Schools, by Gearóid Ó Siaghail and Cristín Déiseach, is recommended.*
- Guided by a comprehensive and detailed whole school plan, the school makes very good provision for all strands of the English curriculum. Teachers make effective use of varied teaching methods. Oral language skills are appropriately developed. Pupils take full part in these lessons, discussing themes and topics with interest. Pupils are making very good progress in their English reading. With the help of the resource teacher, the infant classes make very good provision for the development of comprehension and phonological skills. This provision is supported by a strong emphasis on reading as a pastime. Commendable emphasis is placed on differentiation in English, especially in relation to spellings and reading. It is evident that pupils derive enjoyment from the writing process. They write capably in a range of genres.
- The teachers make very effective use of a variety of teaching methods to present the mathematics curriculum. Appropriate emphasis is laid on teaching the language of Mathematics and mental mathematics. Very creative use is made of resources and the pupils are afforded regular opportunities to work with concrete materials, especially in groups. The pupils display ability with regard to problem solving. The subject is connected cleverly with the life and experience of the pupils. Appropriate attention is

devoted to differentiation. Suitable provision is made for the development of estimation skills and communication. Every effort is made to present a rich mathematical environment. Building on the good work which was done in the lower classes as regards the organisation of literacy activities, it would be worthwhile for the staff to organise similar activities for Mathematics.

- The pupils derive great enjoyment and benefit from Physical Education. Comprehensive and structured provision for the various curricular strands is made, with commendable emphasis on the development of specific skills. Very effective use is made of equipment and resources to teach skills and to entice pupils to participate. There is integration with other areas of the curriculum. Great use is made of a diverse range of assessment instruments, including teacher observation, pupil self-assessment and informal records.
- In this school, the teachers approach their work enthusiastically and with assuredness. They display great interest in the progress of the pupils and great efforts are made to present lively and stimulating lessons. Successful and creative use is made of activities, resources and various teaching methods. A good learning atmosphere is cultivated in the school and the pupils approach their work with interest and pride. The work of the pupils is of a high standard and the teachers give regular, positive feedback to them on their progress. The replies of parents to questionnaires indicate that a large majority of them consider “that the teaching is good in the school”.

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

- The learning support team co-operates with the principal and with the classroom teachers to serve the pupils with additional educational needs. Priority is given to the early identification of learning difficulties and action follows on this. Use is made of suitable standardised tests to identify pupils with difficulties and diagnostic testing is done to examine the reasons for their difficulties. Individual programmes are set out for the pupils. Contact is made with external services, when there is need to get advice. Use is made of suitable teaching methods and resources are used successfully. A regular review is conducted of the pupils’ learning targets. A detailed account is maintained of the progress and there is regular communication between the class teachers and the learning support team. In the infant classes, in-class support is provided for pupils and the needs of pupils from other classes are served in small groups or individually. Information regarding the progress of the pupils is shared regularly with parents.

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# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

***This is a translation of the school response which was submitted in Irish***

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

The board of management of Scoil Neasáin would like to thank the Department inspectors for the courtesy they showed to the school community and the professional manner in which they interacted with everyone and in which they undertook this school evaluation.

The school's board of management is very happy that the excellent work of the staff was recognised in this report in addition to the professionalism and enthusiasm with which the school staff and the entire school community undertake their work and responsibilities.

We are particularly happy that recognition was given to:

- The high standard of teaching and learning in the school
- The school atmosphere and the role that everyone plays in the creation of that atmosphere
- The pride which pupils have in their work and learning.

The board of management congratulates the entire school staff, and extends their thanks to the parents and various committees for the work they do and for the support they give to the 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**

We thank the inspectors for the recommendations they made for the school.

- The board of management will review the allocation of staff for the forthcoming school year.
- Standardised testing of Irish will take place in the school from May 2012 onwards.
- Scoil Neasáin was involved in the testing of the Assessment Profiles for Irish in Gaeltacht schools and Irish-medium schools when they were initially designed and, until now, they were in use in the classrooms on an informal basis. During the school year 2011 – 2012, the use of the Assessment Profiles for Irish will be reviewed on a more formal basis.