

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Uí Riada
An Bhánóg, Kilcock
Co. Kildare
Roll no: 198971

Date of inspection: 3 March 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

This is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It provides education through the medium of Irish for boys and girls from junior infants to sixth class. There are 439 pupils attending the school at present, the majority of them having a good record of attendance. The school was founded in 1986 and moved to a modern building in Bánóg in 2007. The teaching staff comprises the principal, sixteen class-teachers and five learning-support teachers. During the Whole School Evaluation, the inspectors visited nine classrooms and three settings for support teaching, where they observed the teaching and learning. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics, Geography and Art. 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 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 the in-school management team run the school business competently and they are commended for their leadership in the area of school improvement.
- A wide-ranging programme is followed in the area of visual arts and the quality of the learning and teaching is high.
- The school has a comprehensive collection of administrative and curriculum plans.
- The parents' committee is a great support to the school and it takes part in a wide range of school events.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A whole-school approach to the development of oral skills in Irish and English should be adopted, based on the learning objectives of the curriculum.
- It is recommended that the subject-specific language necessary for teaching and learning the various subjects of the curriculum through the medium of Irish be recorded and taught on a whole-school basis.
- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the development of the pupils' geographical skills.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management provides prudent leadership for the school. A wide range of subject-matter is covered at their meetings, which are professionally run, and accurate minutes of proceedings are kept. The members of the board play an active part in the life of the school. It is recommended that the board fill the vacancies in its composition and that an agreed report on every meeting be shared with the school community.
- The principal, the deputy principal and six teachers with posts of special responsibility comprise the in-school management team. The principal displays impressive leadership skills. He manages the school effectively and sets out precise whole-school structures. He shows a good understanding of education in general and bases his decisions concerning teaching and learning on educational principles.
- The in-school management system is very effective and each member has specific responsibilities. They devise an action plan for each term and these plans are implemented thoroughly. The fact that the responsibilities are regularly reviewed is commended, as is the fact that meetings of the in-school management team are regularly convened.
- The school has a very strong parents' association, which is particularly commended for its part in the organisation of events such as Mathematics Week, Irish Week and Science Week.
- It is evident that the parents' association plays a part in the drafting of policies and that they have a particular system for contacting the full cohort of parents. In the light of the results of the survey of parents conducted as part of this evaluation, it is recommended that the school review the structures it operates to keep parents informed of the work of the board of management, the work of the parents' association and the planning process.
- Considerable information is shared with parents regarding their children's progress and the opportunity provided for them to respond to the written reports on their own children is invaluable. It is recommended that the school give parents, in written form, the results achieved by their own children in the standardised tests, as required in circular 0138/2006.
- It is clear that the pupils feel safe and sound at school and that there is a good relationship between them and their teachers. On the whole, the pupils are well managed. The school has a code of discipline and the pupils themselves attest that they know the school rules and that they behave well at school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The whole-school curricular and administrative policies are of a high standard. The administrative plans give precise guidance for the day-to-day management of the school. The curricular plans offer possibilities for continuity and for advancement of learning in the various areas of the curriculum.
- The whole-school approach to the individual teacher's planning in mainstream classes and in support classes is commended. The results of the short-term plans would be enhanced if they were based on specific curriculum objectives. The link between the monthly reports and the short-term plans could also be reinforced.

- The school should record and teach the subject-specific language needed by the pupils to cope with the curriculum through the medium of Irish. More comprehensive planning might also be undertaken for the development of pupils' oral skills in English and Irish.
- It is appreciated that a start has been made on the self-evaluation process and that this is focused mainly on teaching and learning. This is good practice, which should be continued.
- There is a good quality of planning in the learning-support classes. Clear learning targets are set for the pupils and their progress is recorded regularly.

Child protection policy and procedures

- 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

- Impressive ability and professionalism were observed in the teachers' work during the evaluation. Particularly praiseworthy was the use made of a wide range of methodologies and teaching resources, in the lessons. The fine, stimulating environment created in the classrooms is also commended.
- A helpful range of assessment strategies is regularly used and the teachers are commended for keeping the folders, in which every pupil's progress is recorded, in such good order. It would enhance the learning if this data were used to provide differentiated programmes in the mainstream classes.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good and an Irish atmosphere is promoted throughout the school. The lessons are presented in a lively manner and a great variety of resources and poetry is used to support the teaching. Work on the four strands of the curriculum is regularly done. It is recommended that extra emphasis be placed on developing the pupils' oral ability by stressing language input at infant level, by providing regular opportunities for communication in the middle classes and by developing and extending pupils' communicative ability in the senior classes.
- The standard of teaching and learning in English is good. Reading skills are developed systematically throughout the school and the majority of pupils read with accuracy and understanding. The writing process is emphasised and pupils get experience of writing in a wide variety of genres. There is scope for a more thorough implementation of the whole-school approach to penmanship. A whole-school approach to the development of oral language, based on the development of specific curricular objectives at each class level, should be devised and implemented.
- A wide range of pedagogical methods was observed in the teaching of Mathematics. Concepts were clearly explained and the pupils were questioned appropriately. Resources were skilfully used and, during the evaluation, the pupils were actively

involved in learning. To develop the teaching of Mathematics in the school, it is recommended that the teaching of the language of Mathematics be further emphasised and the pupils' problem-solving ability fostered.

- In the teaching of Geography, stimulating resources are used to promote the pupils' interest. Effective use is made of illustrative material, of explanation and discussion to present concepts. It is recommended that the development of geographical skills be afforded a more central position and that pupils be given a broad experience of investigative geographical skills such as questioning, observation, analysis and measurement. To achieve this, active learning methods should be emphasised.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the Visual Arts is very good and a very supportive atmosphere is created in this area throughout the school. Pupils' work across the strands of the curriculum is of a high standard and great care is taken that pupils learn to look and respond. The systematic work done on renowned artists is commended. It is evident that many of the pupils are knowledgeable about concepts of art.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- A comprehensive policy has been drawn up for special education and a specific system devised to support pupils with special educational needs. This system involves a mixture of class work and of group-work outside of class and regular contact is maintained between the class-teachers and support-teachers. It is now recommended that the school conduct self-assessment, based on concrete data, on the effectiveness of this system.
- The graded work done on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills is commended, as is the wide-ranging programme being implemented to foster social and life skills.

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, the Parent's Association and the staff of the school would like to express their sincere thanks to the team of inspectors who spent a week with us in the school for their professionalism, kindness and understanding. Overall, we consider the report to be balanced and helpful.

We are happy and proud that the excellent work that is being carried out by the staff and pupils of the school with the support of the management and parents was recognised. The Board of Management recognises the high quality of the pupils and staff in the school and we thank them for their efforts during the evaluation.

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

The school staff have discussed the recommendations made in this report. As a result of this discussion, the staff have accepted the recommendations in the report and now the staff have a plan and are engaged in ongoing work in order to implement the curriculum recommendations of the report.

The Board of Management is endeavouring to fill the vacancies on the Board of Management without delay.

A review has been carried out of the structures in the school to keep parents informed about the work of the Board of Management, the work of the Parents Association and the planning process. There are new means of communication opened up with the parents in order to ensure that this information is disseminated.