

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil an Duinnínigh
Swords, Co. Dublin
Roll Number: 19898K

Date of inspection: 16 December 2010



1. Introduction

Scoil an Duininigh is an all-Irish school which was founded as a result of demands from parents of the area that education be provided for their children through the medium of Irish. The school is situated at present in prefabricated rooms, near the town of Swords. A new school is under construction and soon this building will be in use as the school venue. The majority of the pupils come from families in the area and, although very few children are reared through Irish, great support is given to Irish and to education through Irish. Irish heritage is imbibed by the school, with the strong encouragement of the principal in particular. Music is interspersed with all happenings within the school. A conspicuous empathy and mutual respect are discernible within the school community environs. The contact with parents is identified as an extremely important component of the communication process: replies to questionnaires and an interview with a small number of parents indicate that they are very happy with 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:

- Work commitment is discernible in every aspect of the work of the school; the principal plays an important role in this regard.
- A fine order pertains to the work of the board: a fine assuredness and high standard apply to the teaching and the learning in general.
- A high standard has been achieved by many pupils in significant aspects of Irish and in every section of English.
- A strong, positive relationship is nurtured between the school and the community.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a strategic plan be laid out in order to raise even further the pupils' writing standards in Irish.
- Although good teaching and fine participation were observed in Mathematics, it is recommended that greater attention be paid to attainment in this subject.

3. Quality of School Management

- A Board of Management operates under the rules of the Department of Education. The members work conscientiously in order to ensure that a wide, effective education is being provided. A high standard and fine clarity apply to the financial accounts.
- The statutory, curricular and pastoral policies and policies relating to administration have been approved by the board and are being put into effect regularly and to good effect.
- Good relations and interest in school development are discernible among the staff members. The principal works hard for the development of the school. The posts of responsibility are apportioned suitably, but it is recommended that a member of the in-school management team have responsibility for special education.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The planning is done on the basis of whole-school co-operation and specific targets are set down to implement the major aims of the plan.
- Every teacher sets down a long-term work plan for his/her class under the strands and strand units that are in the curriculum. It is recommended that the same approach be applied in the short-term planning and it is recommended that stronger provision be made for differences in the abilities and the learning styles of the pupils. Every teacher maintains a monthly report on work progress. It is recommended that a school template be developed, wherein the completed work would be clarified and an emphasis placed on the skills and the concepts that have been learnt by pupils.
- Self-evaluation is conducted on an informal basis, in relation to what has been achieved and what has yet to be implemented.
- 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

- A high standard pertains to teaching and learning in the school, in relation to most subjects. The subjects are presented in a structured manner at a suitable pace, with appropriate emphasis on the interest levels and abilities of the pupils. Strong consideration should be given now to developing the use of new technology as a teaching and learning aid. This deficit has been identified by the pupils in the completed questionnaires: when the school is settled in the fine, new building in a little while, the opportunity will be facilitated to achieve the above.
- An exceedingly commendable standard in Irish has been achieved by the majority of pupils in this school. They have a wide vocabulary; in order to ensure even further

development in oral Irish, it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on language syntax on a more formal, structured basis at senior level. The pupils read the class texts very accurately and it is noticed that most of them have a very satisfactory understanding of what they are reading. A good number of pupils identify challenging vocabulary by using phonics skills, through the context and by breaking words down into their syllables. The number and quality of the books could be enhanced at the junior level so that the pupils would have a wider experience of reading different kinds of texts. A satisfactory standard is being achieved by the pupils in functional writing but it is recommended that fluency, accuracy and creativity be cultivated even further. It is recommended that a strategic plan be devised to develop this aspect.

- A high standard applies to the teaching and learning of English. Higher-order language activities are nurturing rich learning opportunities. Reading skills in the junior classes are taught with particular expertise, by means of doing good planning for the development of phonology and vocabulary. It is recommended that this work be further connected with real books. A good number of pupils read with fluency and they discuss the reading material with understanding and enjoyment. A good standard applies to the teaching of poetry: poems are taught with creativity and imagination and the pupils are encouraged effectively to undertake their own compositions. The creative writing of the pupils is celebrated by means of displays and publications. A high standard applied to a good portion of the written work observed during the evaluation.
- A satisfactory standard in Mathematics is being achieved by a large number of pupils in this school. The majority of pupils indicate a good understanding of the suitable concepts. Good care is taken to teach the terminology of Mathematics in a structured manner. Useful discussion is conducted in all classes to consolidate the concepts. In order to ensure that the attainment of the pupils is closely observed, it is recommended that a more definite assessment system be put in place and further analysis be done on the results of standardised tests. It is recommended, also, that the ability of all pupils be taken into account when the short-term plans are being prepared, to ensure that the work is adapted for pupils of every ability level.
- Order, imagination, enjoyment and a satisfactory standard of teaching and attainment pertain to the approach to the teaching and learning of the Visual arts. Nice examples of the pupils' work were on view in the numerous presentations which were all around the classrooms. The planning in this aspect is in keeping with the content and the guidelines of the curriculum. Commendable attention is directed at teaching particular skills, especially those which relate to the understanding of colour and of drawing.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The quality of learning and teaching for pupils who have special educational needs is good. A systematic, progressive programme, which is serving the identified needs of the pupils, especially insofar as the development of phonological awareness is concerned, is followed. With the junior pupils, suitable emphasis is placed on early identification in literacy to avoid learning difficulties. It is recommended that the support team identifies, in partnership with their colleagues in the mainstream classes, the most effective means of assisting the senior pupils. As regards the results of the pupils in Mathematics, it is deemed that pupils with difficulties in Mathematics should be identified early and attention directed towards the provision of support for Mathematics. It would be of benefit to learning if support for pupils with special educational needs were one of the responsibilities set down for the in-school management team.

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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, school staff and the parents' association thank the inspectors for the professional approach they adopted during the WSE.

The report gives a good indication of the work that is being carried out by all stakeholders of the school and we are proud of the recognition given to the strengths of 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

The staff have discussed the recommendations of the report and they will be a useful guide for us as we review and plan for the future.

Now that the school is located in the new building, we are happy that pupils will have more opportunity to engage in technology.