

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning**

REPORT

**Coláiste Naomh Éinne
Inis Mór, Co Galway
Roll number: 71300M**

Date of inspection: 24 May 2016



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

Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in May 2016 in Coláiste Naomh Éinne. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with the school's board of management, in-school management, and groups of teachers, parents and students. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and responses to questionnaires and examined other data in relation to the operation of the school. As part of the evaluation, a range of lessons across a number of subject areas was inspected. 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.

Introduction

Coláiste Naomh Éinne is a co-educational post-primary school on Inis Mór, the largest of the Aran Islands in Co. Galway. The school is located in the Aran Island Language Planning Area. The school operates under the auspices of the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (ETB). Sixty one students were enrolled in the school in 2015/16 of which ten students had come from mainland schools as part of *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoírí Gaeilge* and were following the Transition Year (TY) programme. The continuous fall in school enrolment since 2011 and the reduction in the estimated numbers in feeder primary schools for the period 2016-2024 are major challenges for the school. The great majority of pupils in the school are from families whose home language is Irish.

Parents of students involved in the *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoírí Gaeilge* were not included in the parents' questionnaire.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- The board carries out its responsibilities thoroughly and takes an active role in the development of the school.
- Senior management are diligent and committed to the school and its development.
- Particularly notable were the strong morale of staff and the atmosphere of mutual respect between teachers and pupils.
- Care is at the heart of the school ethos and very good support is provided to pupils.
- In the majority of lessons evaluated, the quality of teaching and learning was of good or very good, and exemplary practice was in evidence in some of these lessons; scope for improvement was in evidence in the remaining third of lessons observed.

Recommendations for Further Development

- The board of management should make arrangements to develop a strategic plan for the future of the school as well as appropriate structures to implement and review such a plan.
- The leadership roles of senior management to implement and review this strategic plan should be identified.

- The high-quality practices evident in over half of the subject plans should be incorporated into the plans for all subjects and programmes, especially in relation to improvement plans.
- The differentiated and active teaching and learning strategies which were the primary methodologies employed in the majority of lessons should be used more widely to significantly develop teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Steps should be taken to implement a whole-school approach to guidance and school self-evaluation (SSE) and to develop procedures to review the school SSE plans.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The school operates under the auspices of the Galway and Roscommon ETB. The ETB provides a good level of support to the school and to the provision of Irish-medium education. Board meetings usually take place four times per year. In order to improve co-operation between partners in the management of the school, it is recommended that an agreed report on the proceedings of board meetings be distributed among teaching staff and parents' representatives. At present the principal prepares a short annual report for the ETB on the operation of the school. An area for development is the preparation of a more comprehensive report to be presented to the board and other partners in order to ensure openness and clarity in communication.

The board has adopted a number of compulsory policies but other policies have yet to be drafted, notably a health and safety policy. This need should be addressed and a system of regular policy review should be adopted to ensure that all policies are kept up-to-date. It is recommended that the parents' committee and student council be more centrally involved in this policy work.

Board members are keen to preserve and enhance school's tradition of providing Irish-medium second-level education to the population of the island. Their diligence in this work is to be commended. A number of development priorities have been identified by the board: including increasing enrolment, the development of infrastructure, curricular provision, and increasing the budget of the school to deal with the current challenges facing the school. Progress has been made in relation to a number of these priorities in the past number of years.

In consultation with the members of the island's language planning group, the ETB and the school community; the board should make arrangements for the development of a strategic plan and the appropriate structures to implement and review this plan. Defined targets, identified actions and a timeframe are needed to undertake this strategic process. It is recommended that the SSE process and the development of the quality of subject planning should also be included in the whole-school development priorities. It would be desirable to include a regular progress report on the strategic plan in the agenda of the meeting of all school partners.

The parents' association (PA) actively participates in the promotion of the school throughout the community. There is good communication between the school and the PA. There is scope to improve the communication between the school and the parents of students on the *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoírí Gaeilge* throughout the year.

The student council (SC) is democratically elected and the promotion of leadership among the students is fostered effectively. Consideration should be given to how the students' role in the promotion of Irish could be developed. These two representative groups have only a limited role in the development of policies and it would be worthwhile to augment the profile of both groups and strengthen the link between them and the board.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The principal and deputy principal are committed to the school and to the development of the school as a central part of life on the island. Both believe strongly in partnership and have a democratic approach to management. Consequently, there is good communication and a strong sense of team among staff members. They both carry out a broad range of individual and shared responsibilities in the day-to-day running of the school. It is recommended that the role of senior management should be reviewed to reduce any overlap in their roles, and to delegate certain duties to the deputy principal. This review should define the leadership role of senior management to implement and review the strategic plan.

There is a very limited middle-management structure in the school and the duties of the school's only special duties post holder are discharged effectively. Duties pertaining to the TY programme and *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoírí Gaeilge* are the main responsibilities of this post-holder. Expansion of *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoírí Gaeilge* has been identified by the board as the main way to increase the number of students in the school. It would be worthwhile to delegate responsibility for this priority area to this post holder. A process should be designed whereby structured reporting might be facilitated to senior management and to the board.

Particularly notable were the loyalty of staff to the school and the collegiality of work practices which are commonplace among them. Staff avail of opportunities for Continued Professional Development (CPD). School management encourage participation and staff members share their learning upon returning to school. An agreed whole-staff programme for CPD should be set out. A starting point for such work can be based on the analysis of strengths, challenges opportunities and threats (SCOT) carried out by some subject departments.

Communication between management and staff is good. There is a weekly staff meeting and although general notes are kept on items discussed, minutes are not maintained of the major decisions taken at the meetings. It is strongly recommended that a more comprehensive record be kept of school work from year to year. The capability of most teachers in written and spoken Irish is commended. Those teachers particularly worthy of praise are teachers who started in the school with a limited command of Irish and have succeeded in gaining proficiency in the language.

The quality of curricular plans ranged from very good to plans in which there were more weaknesses than strengths evident. Among the examples of best practice were the comprehensive templates that had been developed, planning for teaching and learning for two class groups timetabled together and an account of actions taken based on relevant recommendations from other inspection reports that had issued to the school. There was evidence in these plans of reflective practice in teachers' annotations, in the analysis of results of certificate examinations and in the departmental SCOTs for some subject areas.

It was also clear that good efforts had been made to adapt literacy strategies to the teaching of particular subjects. This practice should be a part of the planning process in all subjects. It is recommended that results of both certificates be analysed and targets for improvement

set out accordingly. It would be beneficial to develop an action plan for each subject area in accordance with whole-school development priorities and SSE targets.

A broad and balanced curriculum programme is delivered, especially in context of the size of the school. The main priority of the school depends on the capacity of the school to provide a curriculum that satisfies the needs of students and the broadening of the curriculum should be continued. Possibilities to develop distance learning should be investigated. Sport is provided at physical education (PE) time and it is recommended that an appropriate PE programme be provided to all students.

It is also recommended that provision for English and Mathematics in the junior cycle be reviewed in the context of guidelines set out in appropriate circulars. Despite students having the appropriate subject groupings to follow the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), there has been a consistent reduction over the past five years in the uptake of the programme, therefore it is recommended that participation in the LCVP is kept under ongoing review. An extensive range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities is made available to students.

The school's behaviour code is clear and comprehensive and written in a manner that is understandable for students, parents and school staff. The good behaviour of students and high standard of fluency in Irish was noteworthy during the inspection. Every five years the relationship between student attendance and their performance in the Leaving Certificate is examined and the outcomes are shared with all students. This initiative is worthy of praise, and should be carried out more frequently, the results of Junior Certificate should also be included in this analysis with both students and parents.

A key strength of this small school is the sense of care and positive rapport apparent between teachers and students. The school has developed good initiatives to promote pastoral care. As part of the inspection, questionnaires were distributed among students and parents. Questions on pastoral care were answered positively and it is clear that both parents and pupils are generally very satisfied with this aspect of the school.

The plan and practice in relation to Guidance is good and it is recommended that the Guidance plan be brought before representatives of all school partners to enhance the whole-school profile of the Guidance provision. The programmes of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) are being delivered in keeping with Department guidelines.

The resource and learning support allocation to the school are being used appropriately and the co-ordinator of this provision has a specialist qualification in this area. A newly built room is exclusively used for learning support. Team teaching with first-year pupils has commenced this year for the first time. It is necessary, however, to access team teaching training for the appropriate staff to derive the most benefit from the allocation of time for this particular support. It is also recommended that the results of the standardised tests be used to improve literacy and to develop numeracy strategies.

Confirmation was provided that the board has formally accepted *Procedures for Child Protection in Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, without any change or amendment, and that school practice is in accordance with *Procedures for Child Protection in Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

1.3 Management of facilities

The school is maintained to a high standard and a pleasant learning environment has been created for students. The draft policy for health and safety should be reviewed and be based

on risk assessments, updated and ratified. Glass should be fitted to classroom doors as part of this work.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

Twelve lessons were observed; Irish was the language of management, teaching and communication in all cases. The quality of teaching ranged from good to very good in the majority of lessons and exemplary practice was in evidence in some of these lessons; scope for improvement was perceived in another significant minority.

The aspects which characterised good practice were the high expectations of teachers for students' learning, the clear delineation of differentiated learning outcomes for the lesson content and the very beneficial active learning opportunities that were created.

Resources generated by teachers greatly supported the quality of the lessons. These often comprised worksheets, diagrams or simplified notes. The use of IT resources was incorporated into a small number of lessons; this greatly enhanced the learning experience of the students. More widespread use of such good practices is recommended.

Also praiseworthy was the continuity from previous classes evident in the best lesson and the fact that recapitulation opportunities were created for students at the end of lessons.

Where all learning opportunities were not achieved, the main reasons for this were that clear differentiated learning outcomes had not been chosen for the lessons and sufficient consideration had not been given to the best methodologies to ensure students' learning were across the ability range. The result of such short comings in short-term planning was that all students could not beneficially engage in the lessons.

Student management in every lesson was very good. There was a good rapport between students, teachers and support staff and this enhanced the positive atmosphere of the school. Students commented favourably on the good atmosphere in the school and it is clear that they are proud to attend Coláiste Naomh Éinne.

There was appropriate emphasis on literacy in over half the classes, however there was no particular strategy in use among teachers. There was one example of appropriate emphasis on numeracy in the lessons observed. More effective monitoring of the use of in-class strategies for literacy and numeracy agreed at school level is necessary to ensure that the SSE process is being implemented.

There was a large variation in the quality of work relating to the assessment of copy-books. Regular developmental feedback should be given to students on their written work, especially in examination classes. It is recommended that the draft policy on assessment be further developed to provide whole-school framework for assessment in all subjects.

There was evidence that results and engagement at various levels in the certificate examinations are analysed. Best practice was in evidence in those subjects where this analysis was closely examined and improvement targets for teaching and learning set out. It is strongly recommended that this approach become normal practice in all subjects.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

Five inspection reports have been published on the school. No reply from the board was received in relation to any of these reports. Three out of four recommendations made at management level have yet to be implemented; the preparation of a health and safety statement, the development of a strategic plan for Irish and the increase in English periods in junior cycle.

3.2 Learning and teaching

It is clear that most of the recommendations relating to teaching and learning have been implemented, especially in the subject departments inspected.

4. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The SSE focus groups has carried out good initial work in relation to literacy, numeracy and teaching and learning methodologies. A good SIP has been developed for literacy and the input of staff, parents and pupils can be seen in the baseline data collected. The experience gained from the development of the SIP for literacy should inform the work on the other two SIPs which are to be developed. It is recommended that a link be made between the SSE strategies in each aspect of teaching and learning and the attainment of pupils in certificate examinations.

Under the leadership of the senior management a better structure should be devised to review targets, to appraise the effectiveness of the SSE strategies and to amend targets in accordance with this monitoring. In order to maintain a whole-school approach, regular reporting is recommended on the implementation of strategies and targets at staff meetings and at board meetings to replace the current general discussion about the SSE process.

The management and staff of the school are committed to the school and the school community and demonstrate that they are dedicated to further the process of school improvement. The opportunity must now be taken to garner the goodwill of the whole school community in order to bring about effective change and to make progress in the most pressing areas. It is recommended that the school planning process be fundamentally changed, and that a more formal, more strategic and more sustainable approach be developed, in accordance with the guidelines on school self-evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Coláiste Naomh Éinne welcomes this positive and affirming report that acknowledges the collegial atmosphere and strong team spirit that exists among staff members and the very good behaviour of students as well as their high level of proficiency in Irish.

The recognition of inspectors of the good quality of teaching and learning in the majority of cases is also welcomed.

The board is delighted that the commitment and thoroughness of the board and senior management is acknowledged.

As there is not a teacher of physical education in the school, all staff members provide sport and a broad range of other activities including extra-curricular activities for the school community. It is the opinion of the board that sport plays a central role in inculcating the good will and good behaviour that prevails among students.

The entire school community is very proud of Coláiste Naomh Éinne and is very aware of the challenges that face the school. The supportive advice in this report will be used to plan and implement progressive steps and supporting actions for the future good of the school.

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

The board in conjunction with the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and an insurance company are working on risk management and an application has been made to the building unit of the GRETB to put glass panels in classroom doors. Initial work has begun on devising a new draft health and safety policy, which includes more comprehensive and robust strategies.

As part of the inclusion of the strategic plan on the agenda of board meetings, the board will extend the regular good communication that it currently has with students to parents, including parents on the island and the mainland. The main decisions taken at board meetings will be made available to the entire school community on a regular basis.

Policy review will be included as a regular item at staff meetings, at the forum of the student council and at meetings of the parents' association.

In a democratic and inclusive manner school development planning will be completely restructured; to include the role of senior and middle management and to develop school self-evaluation in all aspects of teaching and learning so that we can progress together the future of the school.

This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management.