

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Carrigeen National School
Carrigeen, Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 153401

Date of inspection: 2 October 2013



1. Introduction

Carrigeen National School is a co-educational, rural primary school in South County Kilkenny, eight kilometres from Waterford City. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The school population has grown steadily in recent years and there are currently 160 pupils enrolled. Pupil attendance rates are very good. 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:

- The board of management, the parents and the parents' association are strongly committed to supporting the work of the school.
- The principal is commended for his cultivation of positive relationships across the school community.
- The staff of the school is committed and dedicated to supporting the pupils.
- The school building and its surroundings are maintained to a high standard and orderly learning environments are created to support pupils' learning.
- The management of pupils is very good and the pupils are cooperative and courteous, and positive in their learning.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good, with some examples of very good practice observed.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- There should be ongoing review of middle management duties to ensure that they reflect evolving school priorities along with regular formal meetings of the in-school management team.
- Teachers should plan for and implement more structured approaches to differentiation and the promotion of higher-order thinking skills.
- Chun muinín agus scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fheabhsú sa Ghaeilge, ní mór clár céimnithe a chur i bhfeidhm chun a chinntiú go bhfuil forbairt chórasach ag teacht ar an ábhar teanga atá á mhúineadh ó rang go rang. *To improve the pupils' confidence and speaking skills in Irish, it is important that an incremental programme be implemented to ensure that there is systematic development of the language material being taught from class to class.*
- In providing for pupils with special educational needs, it is advised that the use of structured in-class support models be developed along with a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions effectively. The members of the board conscientiously attend to duties, including the prudent management of school finances. They actively engage in the development and review of organisational policies.
- The principal demonstrates praiseworthy commitment and dedication to the ongoing development of the school. He is commended for his cultivation of positive relationships across the school community. He is supported by the deputy principal and the special duties post holders who carry out assigned duties competently. In order to develop their roles, there should be ongoing review of duties to ensure that they reflect evolving school priorities. Regular formal meetings of the in-school management team should be convened to monitor the impact of new initiatives and teaching strategies.
- The school building and its surroundings are maintained to a high standard and orderly learning environments are created to support pupils' learning. A range of teaching resources is available and many of these are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Additional reading materials should be provided in some classroom and support settings. The ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.
- The quality of communications and relationships with the school community is good and parents receive regular updates on school matters through newsletters, the school website and a text service. The parents' association makes a significant contribution to the work of the school. The parent questionnaires indicate that almost all parents feel that the school is well run and that their child is doing well in school.
- The management of pupils is very good and the pupils are cooperative and courteous. They are confident and positive in their learning. The questionnaires administered to pupils demonstrate that almost all pupils feel safe in school and get on well with the other pupils in their class.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. Pertinent administrative policies have been devised and the education partners are actively involved in their review. Aspects of some curriculum plans are useful to teachers in guiding classroom practice. Specific and clear guidance should be included in all plans to ensure progression in learning as pupils proceed through the school.
- The school has begun to engage in valuable school self-evaluation with a particular focus on literacy. Targets for improvement have been developed and action plans generated to address priorities.
- Overall, the quality of teacher planning and preparation is good. Where planning is most effective, it focuses on clear learning outcomes rather than textbook content or topics. This approach should be extended across the school.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good, with some examples of very good practice observed. The teachers use talk and discussion and information and communication technology (ICT) creatively. The effective use of teaching methodologies that promote both independent and collaborative learning skills, as was observed in some settings, should be extended. To develop pupil learning experiences, teachers should plan for and implement more structured approaches to differentiation and the promotion of higher-order thinking skills. In the questionnaires, most pupils indicated that they enjoy their lessons and learning and think that they are doing well in school.
- The quality of assessment is good and a variety of appropriate assessment practices was observed with records of individual pupils' progress in evidence. Work on self-assessment has begun in some classes and this formative approach to assessment should be expanded throughout the school.
- Baineann éagsúlacht le caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge. Ar an iomlán, tá an cleachtas go maith ach tá gnéithe le forbairt i ranganna áirithe. Déanann na hoidí iarracht dáiríre dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a chothú. Chun muinín agus scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fheabhsú, ní mór clár céimnithe a chur i bhfeidhm chun a chinntiú go bhfuil forbairt chórasach ag teacht ar an ábhar teanga atá á mhúineadh ó rang go rang. Ba chóir an dea-chleachtas a bhaineann le straitéisí cumarsáide a leathnú tríd an scoil. Léann cuid mhaith de na daltaí le cruinneas agus le líofacht oiriúnach. Léiríonn formhór dóibh caighdeán réasúnta maidir lena scileanna scríbhneoireachta ach moltar deiseanna breise a thabhairt dóibh chun a saor-scríbhneoireacht a fhorbairt a thuilleadh.

The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is variable. On the whole, practice is good but there is scope for development in some classes. The teachers make a genuine effort to create a positive attitude to Irish. To improve the pupils' confidence and speaking skills, it is important that an incremental programme be implemented to ensure that there is systematic development of the language material being taught from class to class. The good practice associated with communication strategies should be spread throughout the school. A good number of pupils read with appropriate accuracy and fluency. The majority of them demonstrate a reasonable standard in their written skills but it is advised that extra opportunities be given to further develop their free-writing skills.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Most pupils express themselves with suitable confidence. In order to develop their capacity further, a whole-school approach to addressing the breadth of specific oral language objectives should be implemented consistently. Pupil attainment in reading is very good and commendable attention is given to the development of word attack skills. Supplementary readers and class novels are used well in some contexts and this should be extended. Commendable attention is being paid to the promotion of writing skills in all classes and some fine examples of pupils' writing were noted throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable. Appropriate emphasis is placed on oral mathematics and on the development of specific mathematical language in the majority of classes. Some very good use of concrete materials and of mathematical games was also observed. While some praiseworthy problem-solving activities were noted in some classes, it is advised that a greater emphasis be placed on collaborative problem-solving at all levels in the school.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Geography is good. The lessons observed were well structured, and effective use was made of ICT. Further incremental study of the local natural environment should be facilitated along with whole-school attention to the development of geographical investigative skills. Commendable environmental awareness and care practices are fostered throughout the school through the pupils' involvement in the *Green Schools* initiative.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. Supplementary teaching is provided in a caring environment and the support teachers are commended for their encouragement of pupils. The lessons observed were structured appropriately and pupils engaged well. A good quality whole-school SEN policy has been devised. Individual education plans and programmes are devised for each pupil in receipt of support. While some good use of diagnostic tools to identify pupils' individual learning needs was noted, their use should be extended.
- Support is presently provided on a withdrawal basis. It is advised that the use of structured in-class support models be developed along with a greater focus on prevention and early intervention. Opportunities for professional development and sharing of expertise should be created.

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 of Carrigeen National School are pleased that the report recognises the work of the school community and affirms the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of our pupils, parents, staff and Board of Management. The recognition of the quality of teaching, learning and support of our pupils is both positive and encouraging.

We are also very pleased that the report has acknowledged the very high level of satisfaction registered by parents.

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 Board of Management and staff welcome the advice and the recommendations contained with the WSE report.

Some recommendations are in the process of being implemented. The remainder will be phased in as part of our system of self evaluation and continuous improvement.

