

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Rahara National School  
Rahara, Co. Roscommon  
Uimhir rolla: 17100V**

**Date of inspection: 6 December 2011**



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

## 1. Introduction

Rahara NS is a co-educational primary school that operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. There are two mainstream teachers, one visiting learning support teacher and one visiting resource teacher. The school also has an allocation of one full-time Special Needs Assistant (SNA). There are thirty-four pupils enrolled. The school seeks to provide an environment where the Christian values of mutual respect, tolerance, care and justice are encouraged and nurtured.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Music. 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 fulfils its functions effectively. In so doing, it provides thoughtful and informed support to the school and ensures that the school facility is well maintained and suitably resourced.
- The in-school management team engages positively with the curriculum planning process and very worthwhile and informative plans have been produced in English and Mathematics.
- The provision of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school has a reflective approach to assessment and very good use is made of relevant data to monitor and record pupil progress.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good and the teachers communicate high expectations to the pupils in all aspects of the teaching and learning process.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's activities and they express their satisfaction with the school overall.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should publish and circulate an annual report to inform the school community of its work and school accounts should be certified in accordance with Section 18(1) of the *Education Act, 1998*.
- The model of provision in special education settings should be expanded beyond withdrawal to include in-class support and focused early interventions. This approach would build upon the effective practice observed during the evaluation.
- The school plans for Gaeilge and Music should be reviewed to include guidelines for the sequencing and overall management of content in the multi-class settings.
- The board should ensure that parents are not required to pay for aspects of the Music curriculum taught during the school day.

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

- The board of management fulfils its management functions effectively. It is properly constituted and meets regularly. The board implements a maintenance programme that ensures that the school building and grounds are cleaned, refurbished and maintained to a high standard at all times. Members are well informed regarding the achievements of the school and they ensure that a wide range of suitable resources is available.
- A financial report is provided to each meeting of the board. The board should ensure that school accounts are certified in accordance with Section 18(1) of the *Education Act, 1998*. The board should also publish and circulate an annual report on its work and the work of the school.
- The in-school management team is highly successful in managing the day-to-day running of the school. The principal and deputy-principal adopt a consistent approach to the daily operation of the school and the general administration runs smoothly and effectively. In reviewing the duties attached to in-school management posts, the board should ensure that each post has a balance of organisational, pastoral and curriculum aspects. Formal staff meetings should also be convened on a planned basis.
- The activities of the school are underpinned by a child-centred and caring approach. The success of this is reflected in the finding that the pupils are very well behaved and they undertake their learning tasks with enthusiasm and attention to detail.
- Ancillary staff members make a very good contribution to the life of the school.

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

- The quality of the school planning process is very good. The school's organisational plans guide its work in a clear and effective manner. The needs of the school are reviewed in a reflective manner and priority areas for development are identified and addressed in the school plan.
- The school is engaged in a process of self-evaluation in accordance with national requirements. There is a systematic approach to assessment, both formative and summative. Diagnostic assessments are used, as appropriate, and the data gathered are used effectively to plan interventions and to monitor and record pupil progress. This is very good practice.
- The teachers have recently reviewed their curriculum planning documents. Their whole-school plans for Mathematics and English have been updated. These comprehensive plans provide clear guidance regarding teaching and learning in the multi-class settings. A time-line has been set out for the review of other curriculum plans. The teachers are commended for their collaborative approach and for their success in devising these comprehensive plans.
- Teachers plan very carefully for their work and both long-term and short-term plans are closely referenced to the *Primary School Curriculum, 1999*. Learning objectives are stated clearly and content is sequenced appropriately. Due consideration is given to differences in pupil abilities and monthly progress records are retained.

- School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

## 5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good and commendable standards are achieved in literacy and numeracy. Very good use is made of resource materials, information and communications technology (ICT) and collaborative learning approaches to foster pupil interest in learning and to develop appropriate skills and knowledge across the curriculum. Classrooms are print-rich and very well decorated with samples of pupil work, charts and educational posters. Special interest corners are used effectively to display various aspects of the work done.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Baintear leas fóna as modhanna múinte oiriúnacha chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta agus labhartha go céimniúil agus go héifeachtach. Tugtar faoin léitheoireacht go córasach agus léann formhór na ndaltaí le tuiscint agus brí. Tá an scríbhneoireacht ar chaighdeán maith. Moltar fothéamaí a cheapadh faoi na mórthéamaí teanga agus an forchéimniú ó rang go rang maidir le foclóir, gramadach agus struchtúr na cainte a léiriú go soiléir sa phlean scoile.

*The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Constructive use is made of suitable teaching methodologies to stimulate the pupils' interest. Listening and speaking skills are being developed progressively and effectively. Reading is approached systematically and the majority of pupils read with understanding and meaning. The standard of written work is good. It is recommended that sub-themes be formulated under the major language themes and that the progression of vocabulary, grammar and language structure from class to class be clearly presented in the school plan.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Programme content is well planned for each class level. Close attention is paid to the development of phonetic and phonemic awareness, sight word vocabulary, reading for pleasure and fluency. A structured approach is taken to the development of comprehension skills. Process writing is managed appropriately and pupils write for a variety of audiences.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Effective practice was observed in lesson structure, pace and content. Group work, pair work and concrete materials were used to very good effect to support teaching and learning and ICT was used innovatively. There was a consistent approach to activity based learning, the development of mathematical language and problem solving.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is very good. All pupils learn to sing a good range of songs and they gradually extend their repertoire in tin-whistle performance with growing competence and confidence. Suitable provision is made for the strands of composing and listening and responding to Music and pupils are developing an awareness of rhythm, pulse, tempo and pitch. The board should ensure that parents are not required to pay for aspects of the Music curriculum taught during the school day. The school plan should address the sequencing of specific content to be taught from class to class.

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

- Through its enrolment policy the school welcomes all pupils equally and a strong and effective emphasis is placed on equality of provision and participation for all pupils.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individual education plans are developed for all pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching. These plans take due cognisance of recommendations made in professional reports. The effective practice observed would be further enhanced through the use of in-class support.
- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Effective procedures are in place to enable parents to get meaningful information about their children's education and formal parent-teacher meetings are convened annually. It is clear from questionnaires administered to parents in the course of the evaluation that they are satisfied with the work of the school and with their children's progress.

*Published March 2012*

# **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 welcomes this report and wishes to thank the inspectorate for the courteous and professional manner it was conducted. The board is particularly pleased to see our dedicated and hard working staff being recognised and the positive outcomes for children by way of good planning, quality teaching, good communication and a happy environment.

The board of management appreciates the findings in relation to its role in the overall management of the school and will continue to promote the very high standards that exist in 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 new board will have the accounts certified from now on.
- The chairperson of the board is in discussion with staff about more in-class provision in the area of special education.
- A review of Gaeilge and Music will be undertaken to include sequencing and overall management of content in the multi-class setting.
- The board has ceased payment from parents for aspects of the Music curriculum taught during the school day.
- The board undertakes to explore ways to increase communication with the wider community.

