

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire,
Droim Féigh, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow
Uimhir rolla: 09320Q

Date of inspection: 10 April, 2013



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

1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Droim Féigh is a vertical, co-educational, rural primary school. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. The overall attendance of the 96 pupils enrolled is very good. Attendance is monitored carefully and the recently implemented initiatives to promote improved attendance are having a very positive impact. 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 an effective school leader and is commended for successfully promoting a very positive culture of teamwork and partnership amongst all members of the school community,
- The teaching staff is very committed and dedicated to meeting the pupils' learning and pastoral care needs.
- The pupils are highly enthusiastic and interested in their learning.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good, with many examples of particularly effective practice.
- The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard and provide a stimulating learning environment.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Sa Ghaeilge, moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ar bhonn uile scoile. *In Irish, it is recommended that the pupils' oral language skills be developed incrementally on a whole-school basis.*
- The planned review of provision for pupils with additional learning needs should ensure that priority is given to commencing early intervention, increasing the level of in-class support and ensuring the full implementation of the continuum of support.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is hard-working and committed to the development of the school. Members fulfil their assigned roles and responsibilities effectively. The board has played a significant role in the development of the school building and grounds. It has also been active in the review and ratification of school policies. It is advised that the school's policies regarding enrolment and retention are reviewed to ensure full compliance with relevant legislation and Department circular.

- The principal is a highly organised and effective school leader. She is commended for successfully promoting a very positive culture of teamwork and partnership amongst all members of the school community. In the questionnaires, all parents reported that there is a good atmosphere in the school. The principal is capably supported by the deputy principal and together they carry out their duties very efficiently.
- The staff of the school is strongly committed and dedicated to meeting the pupils' learning and pastoral care needs. The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard and provide a stimulating learning environment. Attractive displays of pupils' work enhance classrooms and corridors. A good range of resources, including ICT, is available and used well. It would now be beneficial to further increase the range of materials available to support teaching and learning in Mathematics and Music.
- The school actively encourages high quality relationships with parents and the wider school community. They are kept well informed regarding their children's progress and school activities. The questionnaire responses confirm that all parents are happy with the school and feel welcomed. Some opportunities are provided for parents to support co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The school's plan to further develop opportunities for parental involvement in in-school activities is noted. Parents and the parents' association are very supportive of the school. They contribute significantly to the provision of resources through their involvement in a wide range of fundraising activities.
- The pupils are cooperative and courteous and their behaviour is managed very effectively. They are highly enthusiastic and interested in their learning. In the questionnaires, most pupils report that they like school. Almost all state that they get on well with the other children and all feel that their school is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged in a comprehensive process of school planning. Clear and informative curriculum plans and pertinent organisational policies have been compiled collaboratively. The school has begun to engage in school self-evaluation, with a particular focus on English writing.
- Overall, the quality of teacher planning and preparation is good. The teachers provide long-term and short-term plans and monthly progress reports. To build upon this good practice, greater provision for differentiation in short-term planning would enhance teaching and learning further.
- 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 many examples of particularly effective practice. The teachers communicate skilfully and use talk and discussion well. In some settings, the greater promotion of both independent and collaborative learning skills is required. In addition, the further encouragement of higher-order thinking skills would enhance pupils' learning experiences. In the questionnaires,

almost all pupils report that they enjoy their lessons and learning and all pupils state that their teacher explains things clearly. In response to the parent questionnaires, all parents expressed the view that teaching is good in the school and that their child is doing well.

- Pupil attainment is tracked and monitored using an appropriate range of assessment tools. The results of standardised assessment are used to identify and provide support for pupils with additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy. While lesson provision is differentiated appropriately in some mainstream classrooms, it is advised that assessment outcomes are used consistently to inform classroom planning, lesson content and teaching approaches. In so doing, the current significant use of textbooks and workbooks should be addressed.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith agus baintear dea-úsáid as raon straitéisí oiriúnacha, an Ghaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil san áireamh. Déanann na daltaí an-iarracht abairtí simplí a chumadh agus úsáid chuí a bhaint astu. Bíonn deacrachtaí, áfach, ag cuid acu maidir le láimhseáil na mbriathra. Chun an caighdeán a fheabhsú a thuilleadh, moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ar bhonn uile scoile. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le líofacht oiriúnach agus beidh sé cabhrach anois úsáid a bhaint as raon níos leithne d'ábhair léitheoireachta. Sroichtear caighdeán sásúil sa scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus ba chóir anois béim níos láidre a leagadh ar an scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A range of appropriate teaching strategies are well used, including informal Irish. The pupils make great efforts to construct simple sentences and to use them appropriately. However, some pupils experience difficulty with the manipulation of verbs. To further improve standards it is recommended that pupils' oral language skills be developed incrementally on a whole-school basis. Most pupils read with appropriate fluency but the use of a wider range of reading materials would be helpful. A satisfactory standard is achieved in functional writing and further emphasis should now be placed on independent writing.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. While many pupils speak with suitable confidence and competence, increased attention should be paid to the development of discrete oral language skills. A number of collaborative learning approaches to promote reading and writing are being implemented skilfully. The pupils are capable readers and in the questionnaires, almost all reported that they think they are doing well at reading. A whole-school approach to process writing would further enhance the pupils' writing competence.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are well structured and the pupils are given regular opportunities to use appropriate mathematical language. In all classes, suitable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic and on the development of number facts. The prioritisation of problem solving on a whole-school basis is commended. In the questionnaires, most pupils were of the view that they are doing well at Maths
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is competent overall. The pupils engage with commendable interest and enthusiasm. Song singing is of a good standard and is integrated successfully with other curriculum areas. The development of skills in rhythm receives good attention. Most pupils play the tin whistle with high levels of ability and enjoyment. During the evaluation, a range of stimuli to develop the pupils' composing skills was used effectively. This creative approach merits regular attention through the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school's inclusive learning environment promotes the holistic development of pupils with additional learning needs and a strong culture of cooperation exists between home and school. Individualised learning programmes are drawn up in consultation with class teachers and parents. In some instances, there is potential for more specific target setting. The implementation of well-structured lessons ensures that pupils are making appropriate progress.
- The majority of support for pupils with additional learning needs is organised on a withdrawal basis. The introduction of some class-based interventions to support learning in literacy and numeracy is commended highly. The planned review of the delivery of support teaching is welcomed. In so doing, priority should be given to commencing early intervention, increasing in-class support and providing greater teaching and learning resources. It is further advised that the continuum of support for pupils, as outlined in Circular 02/05, be implemented fully.

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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 together with the staff of Drumphea School would like to acknowledge the courtesy and professionalism of the Department of Education and Skills inspector. We thank the inspector for the manner in which she interacted with the whole school community. We intend to use the report's findings as part of our ongoing system of self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

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 and management take on board the recommendations made in the WSE report. The recommendations have been discussed in relation to Gaeilge and Learning support and will continue to be priorities for the future.