An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Mhuire, Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 09708T

Date of inspection: 6 October 2011
1. **Introduction**

Scoil Mhuire is one of two primary schools in the parish of Knocknagoshel. The school has a staffing of three mainstream teachers, a learning-support/resource teacher and a resource teacher who is shared with three neighbouring schools. She works in Scoil Mhuire for seven hours a week. Sixty-five pupils are currently enrolled in the school. Pupil attendance is good. 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:

- Very good relationships have been established between school staff, the board of management and the parent association.
- Teaching staff are praised for collaborating in the formulation of good curriculum plans and organisational policies which are reflective of the school context.
- All staff members undertake their duties very conscientiously. They display a pride in their work and a commitment to the betterment of the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a very good standard.
- Support teachers plan and deliver comprehensive programmes of work for pupils experiencing learning difficulties.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the school establish and maintain systems whereby the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations can be assessed. A school development plan, focused on the maintenance of quality and the pursuit of excellence should be drafted.
- It is recommended that current practices in the teaching of English be reviewed and that a focus be placed on raising pupil attainment in literacy.
- It is recommended that the current assessment policy be reviewed to ensure that collated assessment data is utilised to evaluate learning and teaching, to track and record pupil progress and to target support for those pupils most in need.
- It is recommended that the current deployment of the learning support teacher be reviewed.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is collectively committed to supporting the work of the school. Board meetings are convened regularly and comprehensive minutes of these meetings are maintained. A range of organisational policies have been ratified by the board. Very good working relationships have been established between the board, the staff of the school and the parent association. Strategies for encouraging regular attendance should
be outlined in the attendance policy and the board should ensure that this policy is ratified. It is recommended that the board publish an annual report so that the broader parent body might be made more aware of its work. It is also recommended that school finances be certified annually as outlined in section 18 (1) of the Education Act (1998).

- The principal undertakes her managerial and administrative duties effectively. She successfully promotes a positive school climate. The deputy principal and special duties post holder conscientiously discharge the wide range of duties assigned to them. It is recommended that the duties of the in-school management team are regularly reviewed to reflect the current school development priorities.

- The school building, comprising of four classrooms, was erected in 1836. Toilets and a staff room were added in 1995. The present accommodation is in need of renovation. It is recommended that the board plan strategically for the provision of more suitable school accommodation. Individual classrooms are well resourced with a range of supportive materials which are very effectively utilised by the teachers.

- An active parent association meets on a regular basis and supports the work of the school. Representatives of the association expressed concerns regarding the suitability of present school accommodation. Responses to questionnaires issued to parents are, in general, very positive. Parents would however welcome a greater role in the drafting of school policies.

- Pupils display a strong sense of pride in their school and community. The pupils are well-behaved and show respect towards others and the school environment. In their responses to questionnaires issued all pupils state that teachers explain lessons clearly and that they feel safe in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A comprehensive school plan has been collaboratively drafted by the teachers. The school has not yet engaged in a process of school self-evaluation. It is recommended that the school establish and maintain systems whereby the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations can be assessed. A school development plan, focused on the maintenance of quality and the pursuit of excellence should be drafted. This plan should be used as a basis for improvements in the school.

- All teachers conscientiously prepare long and short-term schemes in preparation for their work. Monthly reports are systematically completed by all teachers. It is recommended that teachers devise an agreed format for the planning and recording of work and that these documents be utilised to support the process of school self-evaluation.

Child protection policy and procedures

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

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in this school is of a good standard. Teachers deliver lessons which are well structured and paced. A range of teaching approaches and methodologies is utilised to good effect. Pupils work collaboratively in a variety of contexts. Pupil learning is effectively consolidated. It is evident that the majority of pupils are making good progress in their learning commensurate with their abilities.

- Some good practice was observed in the teaching of literacy to pupils. Pupils’ oral language skills are well developed. They utilise very good word attack skills and they are provided with planned opportunities to read for pleasure. A good balance is struck between the creative and formal writing activities. Pupil attainment in English varies from fair to very good. It is recommended that current practices in the teaching of English be reviewed and that focus be placed on raising pupil attainment in literacy. Central to this process is a placing of focus on discrete oral language lessons and a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading strategies. The use of assessment data to match learning activities to the needs of individual learners and groups with different abilities and aptitudes and the creation of increased opportunities for sustained and collaborative writing should also be addressed.

- Múinte ar Ghaeilge go héifeachtach sa scoil seo. Úsáidtear rainn, amhráin, drámaíocht agus mim chun suim a mhúscailt sna daltaí agus chun deiseanna a sholathar dóibh an teanga a úsáid. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le cruinneas agus le liofacht. Tá clochtaí maith ar bun maidir le teagasc na scríbhneoireachta sna ranganna go léir. Moltar anois na suíomh chainte agus na ceachtanna a bheith amháin cumarsáideach agus is féidir agus béis a chur ar fhoghlaímar agus ar úsáid cheart na teanga. Moltar freisin scríbhneoireacht i seanaí éagsúla a thabhairt tríd an scoil.

- Irish is effectively taught in this school. Poems, songs, drama and mime are utilised to engage the pupils and to provide them with opportunities to use language. The majority of pupils read with accuracy and fluency. Good practice is evident regarding the teaching of Irish writing in all classes. It is now recommended that the oral language settings and lessons are as communicative as possible and that an emphasis is placed on learning the language and using it correctly. It is also recommended that pupils’ abilities to write in a variety of genres be further developed throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and pupil attainment in Mathematics is of a very good standard. Care is taken by all teachers to utilise a range of effective methodologies and approaches. Opportunities are provided for the pupils to explore the nature of mathematics and to acquire the associated mathematical knowledge, concepts and skills.

- Pupils’ are facilitated to experience a broad, balanced and stimulating history programme. Excursions to locations of historical interest are regularly organised. Pupils can recall with ease key information relating to areas they have studied. It is recommended that increased focus now be place on developing pupils’ understanding of the concepts of chronology and of change and continuity.

- Pupil attainment in literacy and numeracy is regularly assessed. A range of assessment modes is utilised by individual teachers. There is a need however to articulate a whole-school approach to assessment. It is recommended that the current assessment policy be reviewed to ensure that collated assessment data is utilised to evaluate learning and teaching, to track and record pupil progress and to target support for those pupils most in need. Care should also be taken to ensure that assessment data is utilised to ensure that carefully judged provision is made for individuals and groups of pupils with differing
abilities within the classroom context. This should ensure that all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Both support teachers are highly praised for the drafting of comprehensive individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with learning needs. Increased parental input into these programmes would further enhance their impact. High quality lessons are delivered which successfully address the identified difficulties which pupils are experiencing. A part-time special needs assistant effectively supports the pupils in her care. It is recommended that teachers systematically record pupil progress against the identified learning targets particularly at the end of the instructional period. It is further recommended that assessment data generated at a whole-school level be utilised to identify pupils in most need of support and that the current deployment of the learning support teacher be reviewed to ensure that optimal benefits are accrued to pupils from this service.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school staff, Board of Management and Parents’ Association wish to acknowledge the receipt of WSE. Report. We extend a warm thank you to our inspector for the courtesy and professionalism she displayed during our WSE.

We welcome her recognition of the work and commitment of the teaching staff and the good standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the school.

We are also pleased to note that the work of the Board of Management has been recognised.

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 in conjunction with the in-school management team have considered the key recommendations in the report and are currently working together to facilitate their effective implementation.

Current deployment of the Learning Support teacher is reviewed on an on-going basis.