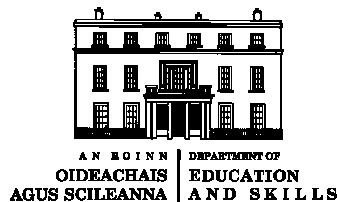


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Scoil Mhuire Girls' National School**  
**Lucan, County Dublin**  
**Uimhir rolla: 13447Q**

**Date of inspection: 16 September 2015**



## 1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire is an all-girls' Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and in the tradition of the Presentation Order. Enrolments are stable and the overall attendance levels of the 681 pupils are very good. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in twelve mainstream class settings and three support teaching settings. 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 **key findings**:

- The board of management plans strategically, ensures that the school optimises the learning experiences and achievements of its pupils, and is fully committed to the careful stewardship of the school.
- The parents' association is enthusiastic and supportive, and works diligently to raise additional funding for school needs.
- The principal provides strong and purposeful leadership and is committed to providing a high quality education for pupils.
- The teachers are skilful practitioners who prepare carefully for their teaching, and provide pupils with high quality learning experiences through the effective delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Standards of pupil behaviour are excellent.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very high.
- There is very effective practice underway in school self-evaluation (SSE) which is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To build on the good work being done in grouping pupils for Maths and English, the school should use its extensive range of assessment data to further inform differentiation.
- With the school having embraced a variety of methodologies to teach History, a review of the whole-school plan and whole-school approaches would be timely.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is of a very high quality. The board plans strategically, ensures that the school optimises the learning experiences and achievements of its pupils, and is fully committed to the careful stewardship of the school.

- The principal provides strong and purposeful leadership. She is committed to providing a high quality education for pupils, and demonstrates a very good capacity to embrace and manage change. She encourages and empowers teachers to develop themselves professionally. She is ably supported in her duties by the administrative deputy principal, and a conscientious and diligent in-school management team, all of whom carry out a wide range of duties to a very high standard. There is a high level of teamwork and collegiality among the whole staff, and a shared commitment to the development of the school and the raising of standards. School records are maintained meticulously.
- The management of resources is very good. Staff members are deployed effectively, and their skills and abilities are used productively to meet pupils' learning, well-being and care needs. All ancillary staff members carry out their duties in an effective and supportive manner. The school is extremely well resourced and all classrooms and corridors provide bright, clean, safe and stimulating learning environments. The building is maintained to a very high standard.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very good, and parents are generous with their time in supporting school events. The parents' association is enthusiastic and supportive, and works diligently to raise additional funding for school needs. Very effective communication strategies are in place to inform and support parents regarding their children's education. Responses to questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation indicate that almost all parents agree that the school is well run and are happy with the school.
- Standards of pupil behaviour are excellent. Pupils are polite and courteous and are welcoming of visitors. They are highly motivated and work cooperatively with staff. Pupils play a role in aspects of decision-making through the activities of the students' council. Responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that pupils are very positive about all aspects of school life.

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

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good. A range of organisational and administrative policies facilitates the smooth running of the school. The quality of recently reviewed curriculum plans is very good.
- Staff members are fully involved in reflective and systematic school self-evaluation (SSE) which has the explicit purpose of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Strong links have been established between the SSE process and classroom practice, and progress is monitored systematically.
- Teachers prepare detailed, objectives-based planning which is informed by the school plan and the SSE process. Some excellent examples of planning were observed during the evaluation. Support teachers prepare high quality care plans for pupils with additional needs.
- 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 quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers provide pupils with high-quality learning experiences through the effective delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. They are skilful practitioners, are very well prepared and organised, share their learning objectives with pupils, and deliver well-structured, well-resourced lessons. Much of the teaching is energetic and enthusiastic, building on pupils' interests and challenging them to think quickly and accurately. Questions are skilfully used to probe understanding and improve pupils' listening and speaking skills. The teachers have worked hard to introduce station teaching. In order to refine this and to build on good practice it is recommended that a collegial approach to objectives-based planning for this work is formalised, and that there is further use of assessment data to ensure fluidity among groupings of pupils. Relationships are harmonious, and in most classrooms the quality of interaction and discussion between teachers and pupils is of a very high standard. Pupils are highly motivated, have positive attitudes to learning, and are able to work independently with the minimum of supervision. They listen attentively, respond well during discussions and work purposefully together. They are making very good progress in their learning, and standards in English and Mathematics are very good. Handwriting and presentation of work are of an excellent quality in all classes.
- Tá rath ar theagasc na Gaeilge agus cuirtear ar chumas na ndaltaí cumarsáid a dhéanamh go cruinn, líofa. Cleachtaítear straitéisí foghlama gníomhacha, agus coinnítear na daltaí lánghníomhach san fhoghlaim. Leagtar béim chóir ar an nGaeilge mar theanga theagaisc, agus éiríonn go geal leis na h-oidí na trí thréimhse cumarsáide a eagrú go cumasach. Cuirtear clár gramadaí i bhfeidhm go córasach agus go tairbheach sa scoil. I ranganna áirithe, bíonn deis ag na daltaí cleachtaí léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta a nascadh go ceardúil leis na gníomhaíochtaí éisteachta agus labhartha. Cuirtear ar chumas na ndaltaí raon leathan de dhánta agus d'amhráin a léiriú.
- *The teaching of Irish is very good and pupils are enabled to communicate accurately and fluently. Participative learning strategies are used, and pupils are kept active in the learning. Correct emphasis is placed on using Irish as the language of instruction, and teachers succeed very well in effectively managing the three phases of communication. A programme of grammar is systematically and beneficially implemented in the school. Opportunities are provided in some classes for pupils to skilfully link reading and writing activities with speaking and listening activities. Pupils are enabled to perform a wide range of poetry and songs.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Lessons are creative and stimulating, and enable the systematic development of the pupils' oral, reading and writing abilities. Phonological awareness, word recognition skills and comprehension strategies are being expanded in a progressive and developmental way. Pupils read with commendable fluency and discuss reading material in an age-appropriate manner. Good modelling and the effective use of questioning help to expand their vocabulary and enable them to use language accurately, fluently and expressively during oral language activities. Written work is approached in a manner that is cognisant of the curriculum and pupils write accurately and fluently in a variety of genres.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is highly commendable. The teachers provide purposeful mathematical activities, use a variety of resources and employ a wide range of creative approaches. Lessons are well-structured and effective use is made of oral discussion. Estimation and problem-solving skills are developed incrementally. Concepts are linked to everyday experiences, and pupils show good understanding of key concepts covered. While pupils are streamed from third class onwards, teachers are advised to further differentiate their teaching based on assessment data to ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately. Continued systematic development of pupils' mental maths strategies is also recommended.

- The quality of teaching and learning in History is good. Pupils are given opportunities to learn about some key events in history and they show knowledge and understanding of some of the main events, people and changes studied. While some very good lessons were observed during the evaluation, there is scope to refine and embed the variety of methodologies used. Timelines are in evidence throughout the school and these could be developed incrementally to cultivate chronological understanding. Discussions with pupils and attractive classroom displays evidence study of the locality. To develop this aspect of the curriculum, the school plan for History should reflect the rich heritage of the locality, and local history should be explored incrementally as pupils progress through the school.
- The quality of assessment is very good. Procedures used for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are accurate and efficient. A broad range of formal and informal assessment modes is used at every class level. Written work is monitored regularly and pupils are given constructive feedback. A variety of diagnostic tests is used where appropriate.

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

- Pupils have ready access to support, and the school is very well resourced to meet additional learning needs. The team demonstrates high levels of commitment to the pupils, and has established positive and caring relationships with them. Support teaching is provided on both a withdrawal and in-class basis. Early intervention procedures are effective. Appropriate individual profiles and learning programmes are formulated in consultation with all partners. As in-class support models become more embedded, further detail in planning for these activities is recommended.
- The school community provides a warm, caring and affirming school atmosphere which serves to create a very nurturing and supportive environment for all pupils. School procedures promote and celebrate inclusion and interculturalism, and this good practice should be set out in the school plan. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided.

# **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 Scoil Mhuire Girls' National School welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation Report of the Inspectorate.

The Board is very pleased that the report acknowledges the very high standards of teaching, learning and pupil achievement evident in the school and the very effective practice underway in school self-evaluation.

The Board appreciates the acknowledgement and positive comments on all the stakeholders-staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management.

The Board believes that the positive findings of this report reflect, not only the commitment and professionalism of the whole staff, but the satisfaction of parents and the positive experiences of the pupils.

### **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 acknowledges the recommendations of the inspectors. The Board is confident that these will be addressed as part of the ongoing process of school improvement and self-evaluation (SSE) already underway in the school.