

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Chill Mhuire
Kilmurry, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla: 13942D

Date of inspection: 20 September 2012



A N R O I N N | **D E P A R T M E N T O F**
O I D E A C H A I S | **E D U C A T I O N**
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | **A N D S K I L L S**

1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Chill Mhuire is a co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The school currently has six mainstream class teachers, a learning support teacher, and is part of a clustering arrangement for resource teaching. Current enrolment is 137 pupils and enrolment data indicate a significant upward trend in recent years. Attendance levels are very good.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in September 2012. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Science. 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 principal leads teaching and learning in a dedicated, proactive and insightful manner.
- The teachers are diligent, innovative and committed to the achievement of high standards in teaching and learning.
- Pupils are very well behaved and contribute commendably to the creation of a positive and happy learning environment.
- This school has an enthusiastic and proactive board of management. The board members, both collectively and individually, give generously of their time and talents in the service of the school.
- Parents support the school in variety of ways and the school is maintained and resourced to a high standard.
- Science provision is a particular strength of this school and very high standards are achieved in Mathematics and English reading.
- Provision for pupils with special needs is managed and delivered very well.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management should formalise the current arrangements for special duties posts as per Circular 07/03.
- To build on good practice in Irish, it is recommended that further emphasis be placed on fostering an Irish atmosphere in the school, more engagement with real books and the extension of free writing exercises.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets frequently and manages the school in a very effective and transparent manner. Carefully maintained board records are evidence of rigorous involvement of the board in the broad spectrum of decision-making concerning the education of the pupils. The chairperson and individual members of the board are commended for the manner in which they use their particular skills for the betterment of the school community. Finances are prudently managed and the accounts are audited annually.
- The principal leads the school with highly commendable dedication and efficiency. He prioritises pupils' learning and welfare, positive relationships among all the partners and the achievement of high standards as key emphases in his approach to leadership. The principal is ably supported by the deputy principal and special-duties teacher who contribute generously to the leadership of the school. The willingness and capacity of non post-holders to lead initiatives is also acknowledged. To further enhance good practice in this area the board should formalise the current arrangements for special duties posts as per Circular 07/03.
- The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. The board is commended for the significant programme of upgrading and improvements carried out in recent years. Further upgrading and extension are at an advanced stage of planning. Teaching and learning are well-resourced. Suites of portable laptops are used effectively to enhance the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) into the classroom. When funds become available a further extension of the school and classroom library stocks is recommended, to complement the implementation of the school's reading initiative.
- The behaviour of pupils during the evaluation was excellent. They were courteous and friendly and engaged with tasks in a willing and enthusiastic manner. Responses to the pupil questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation indicate that a high percentage of pupils have very positive attitudes towards school. The school has a students' council through which pupils have had appropriate and worthwhile input into the school plan. The pupils also contribute significantly to the school's monthly newsletter.
- The school has an active and supportive parents' association (PA). The PA has worked assiduously to involve parents in the life of the school and to make the school the focal point of the community. Supports provided by the PA encompass a wide range of sporting, social and curriculum initiatives, as well as the organisation of significant school events. Parents were surveyed at the time of the evaluation and all respondents indicated that they felt teaching was either good or very good in the school. Regular meetings, frequent communications by newsletter, website and text ensure that parents are supplied with regular updates on school activities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- There is evidence of commendable commitment to the school self-evaluation process. School records provide evidence of rigorous engagement with a process of collecting data from various sources, analysing data carefully and using the results of the analyses to plan for improvement. Standardised tests, pupil surveys, samples of work, profiles and checklists are among the tools used to gather evidence on the quality of provision across a range of curriculum areas. While this work has been primarily focused on literacy and

numeracy, there is evidence of useful evaluative work being carried out in a broad spectrum of curriculum areas.

- Arising from the school's engagement with self-evaluative processes, a number of initiatives have already been introduced and some of these initiatives have been subject to further evaluation in an effort to determine their effectiveness. A programme designed to motivate pupils to read and to increase reading fluency is working well and will now be augmented by a concerted effort to teach the specific component skills of reading comprehension. Various steps have been taken to strengthen competency in solving word problems in Mathematics and this work is subject to ongoing review and further development.
- All of the teachers plan conscientiously for their teaching and record progress accordingly. Agreement has been reached at staff level on the key components necessary for effective short term planning. Recording of monthly progress has been similarly addressed.
- 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 teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good overall. Classrooms are well-ordered, attractive and stimulating. Lessons observed were very carefully planned, well structured and suitably differentiated to meet the needs of pupils of varying abilities. A broad range of progressive methodologies is employed to ensure innovative and stimulating presentation of the curriculum. Effective teacher modelling, group work, peer tutoring and the productive use of ICT enhance possibilities for learning. Curriculum integration is a common feature of practice.
- Tugtar faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go cogúsach. Sonraíodh gnéithe dea-chleachtais teagaisc ag gach leibhéal agus ardchleachtas i suímh áirithe. Díreann aird inmholta ar chluichí teanga, ar rainn, amhráin agus scéalta, ar scileanna fíorchumarsáide a fhorbairt agus iad siúd go léir go hidirghníomhach, taitneamhach. Éiríonn leis na hoidí dul chun cinn inmholta a dhéanamh i dteagasc na scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta. Tá tús maith curtha i gcrích i dtaobh féinmheastóireacht a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán ghnéithe áirithe na Gaeilge sa scoil cheana féin. Chun tógáil ar an dea-chleachtas seo moltar díriú a thuilleadh ar atmaisféar Gaelach a chothú sa scoil, breis fíorleabhar a léamh agus cleachtadh na saorscríbhneoireachta a leathnú.

The teaching of Irish is undertaken conscientiously. Aspects of good practice in teaching were noted at all levels and very good practice in certain settings. Praiseworthy emphasis is placed on language games, on rhymes, songs and stories, on the development of real communication skills, and all of these aspects are covered in an interactive and enjoyable manner. The teachers succeed in making commendable progress in the teaching of reading and writing skills. Good progress has been made in evaluating the standard of aspects of Irish in the school. To build on good practice in Irish it is recommended that further emphasis be placed on fostering an Irish atmosphere in the school, more reading of real books and the extension of free writing exercises.

- In English, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. An integrated approach to teaching oral, reading and writing skills is implemented throughout the school. Pupils are given worthwhile opportunities to engage in pair, group and drama

activities and exhibit confident oral skills. A school initiative to promote independent reading, together with a focus on the modelling and teaching of the component strategies of comprehension, provides additional worthwhile support for the school's quest to maximise pupil attainment in this area. A broad range of writing genres is practised and pupils have developed a neat cursive style of writing and present their work carefully and attractively.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a very high standard, as evidenced by standardised test results and interactions with pupils. Lessons observed featured clear methodical teaching, good use of the environment and pupils' interests, and a strong emphasis on activity based pupil-centred enquiry. Number rhymes and songs, skip counting and number sequencing are used effectively to consolidate early number concepts. Target boards are used to construct valuable mental mathematics activities and project-based learning enhances the linkage of mathematical strands. Mathematics provision is further enhanced by initiatives such as *Maths Stations* and *Mathletics*, an online Mathematics learning platform.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is of a very high standard. The well-structured lessons observed featured focused talk and discussion, a plentiful supply of well-prepared resources and an ordered application of scientific method. The school has been involved in various initiatives aimed at promoting Science. The *Discover Primary Science* log books indicate the depth and breadth of work covered over the last three years. In that time the school has won national awards for *Science and Maths Excellence* and an overall national award in the *Intel Mini-Scientist* competition. Work in Science has been enriched through talks from visiting experts, suitable educational trips, the development of a school garden and involvement in the *Green Schools* programme.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The organisation, management and delivery of supports to pupils with special educational needs are of a very high standard. Practice is governed by a carefully considered and well-defined policy document which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of all relevant parties and guides the process of screening, assessment, selection of pupils and the monitoring and recording of progress. The progress of all pupils on the learning support and resource caseload is very carefully tracked and recorded. Support teachers and classroom teachers co-operate successfully in planning programmes. Parental involvement is well-facilitated. Parents of these pupils are invited to observe teaching in support settings and are assisted in the delivery of home based interventions.
- Teaching in support settings is well-structured and methodical and designed to meet the particular needs of pupils. Early intervention, on the basis of teacher observation and effective screening, is a key component in the provision of support for pupils.
- Support is delivered to individuals and groups, both in classrooms and on a withdrawal basis. A worthwhile programme of in-class support has been developed and implemented. High levels of collaboration between a class teacher and the support teacher were observed in the teaching of phonics, sight words and writing in a junior class setting.

Published February 2013

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 and staff of Kilmurry N.S. would like to thank the inspector for the courteous and professional way in which the WSE was conducted. We believe that the report is an accurate reflection of the teaching, learning and management of our 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 Board of Management and staff welcome the advice and recommendations in the report. The Board of Management has formalised arrangements for the special duties post. Tá a thuilleadh á dhéanamh againn chun atmaisféar Gaelach a chothú sa scoil.