Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil na gCailíní,
Senior Girls’ School,
Castleblaney, County Monaghan
Uimhir rolla: 16202B

Date of inspection: 2 February 2012
1. **Introduction**

Scoil na gCailíní, a senior girls’ school in Castleblaney town, operates under the patronage of the Bishop of Clogher. The 118 pupils enrolled have good attendance records. Five mainstream and two support teachers serve the educational needs of pupils. The school participates in the Department’s Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme and it also receives funding from the School Completion Programme (SCP). The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 successfully manages and supports the school.
- The principal leads the school in a very effective, progressive manner.
- The teaching staff are commended for their commitment to the school and to the welfare of pupils.
- The parents’ association is very supportive of the work of the school.
- The quality of the school self-evaluation process and improvement practices are commendable.
- The quality of teaching and learning in many aspects of the curriculum areas evaluated was very good.
- Effective channels of communication foster good relationships among school partners.
- Pupils are commended for their excellent behaviour and interest in learning.
- The school and its environs are maintained to a very high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar clár a dhearadh do labhairt an Bhéarla agus na Gaeilge sa scoil. (*It is recommended that a whole-school plan be delineated for oral language in English and Irish*).
- It is recommended that differentiated provision be made for pupils to systematically develop their literacy skills.
- It is recommended that pupils’ higher order and problem-solving skills be consistently developed throughout the school.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is properly constituted, functions effectively and is very supportive of the school. All members have been assigned specific roles and contribute significantly to the administration of the school. The board is commended for its continuous efforts to improve facilities for teaching and learning.

- The quality of school leadership is very good. The enthusiastic principal leads the school in an effective, affirmative manner where a culture of collaboration is productively cultivated. The deputy principal is very supportive of the principal and together they actively lead the school community with a clear sense of purpose. Post holders fulfil their assigned duties conscientiously. However, it is recommended that the curriculum leadership role of the inschool management team be further strengthened.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. Teachers are deployed appropriately with due consideration given to the needs of pupils. Ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth functioning of the school. The school building and its environs are maintained to a very high standard. Organised and stimulating learning environments are created to support pupils' learning. Further use of information and communication technology (ICT) in pupils' learning is advised.

- Management and staff have made a concerted effort to ensure that the school is an inclusive learning community. They have succeeded in involving parents in many aspects of school life including teaching and learning initiatives. Clear communication channels have been established between the board of management and the parents' association. Almost all parents indicated, in questionnaires administered during the evaluation, that they were satisfied with the educational provision in the school.

- The management of pupils is very good. An atmosphere of mutual respect is effectively cultivated. Commendable practices and procedures are in place to ensure the wellbeing, and safety of all pupils. Dáil na nÓg, the pupils' council, affords them opportunities to contribute to various facets of school life. Responses in the pupil questionnaires, distributed during the evaluation, indicate a very high level of pupil satisfaction with the school.

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

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. The school plan provides helpful guidance on all aspects of curriculum and organisational provision. Clear improvement targets and strategies for their achievement have been delineated.

- All teachers maintain appropriate classroom planning. Clearer links between teachers' planning and the whole-school strategic plan should be established. More explicit provision for differentiation in all planning is advised.

- 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 and learning is good with some very good practice evident. Features of effective practice include well-structured lessons, high levels of pupil engagement and the use of active-learning approaches. Additional whole-school approaches to differentiation and the regular promotion of pupils’ higher order thinking skills would enhance their learning experiences. A range of assessment strategies is used effectively throughout the school.

- Tá dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge á chothú i measc na ndaltaí. Is inmholta mar atá straitéisí oiriúnachá in úsáid chun deiseanna a thabhairt dóibh a gcuí Gaeilge a chleachtadh go neamhfoirmiúil. Is féidir le roinnt mhaith darlaitriúcháin a úsáid go hoiriúch. Ní mó r chininí, áfach, go bhfuil forbairt chórasach ag teacht ar an ábhar teanga atá á mhúineadh ó rang go rang. Ar an iomlán, múinteann scileanna na léitheoireachta go córasach agus leáinn roinnt mhaith dalaitní le tuiscint agus le lófacht áirithe. B’fhéidir le roinnt mhaith dallaití a chur á fáil do ndaltaí agus a gcumas teanga a shaibhriú. Tá na dalaití ag forbairt ag gcuímsc scribhneoireachta go neamhspleách agus iad ag baint úsáid mhaith as an bhfoclóir atá ar eolas acu.

- A positive attitude towards Irish is successfully nurtured among pupils. The strategies used to afford pupils opportunities to practise Irish informally are commendable. Many pupils are capable of using verbs appropriately. There is need, however, to ensure, that the language content is incremental from class to class. In general, reading skills are taught systematically and many pupils read with understanding and a certain fluency. It would be worthwhile to extend the reading material available to pupils and enrich their language accordingly. Pupils are developing their ability to write independently making appropriate use of the language they have acquired.

- The quality of English is good. In general pupils receptive and expressive skills are suitably developed. In order to maximise the impact of language learning, it is advised that a discrete oral language programme be delineated to identify clear content objectives and learning outcomes at each class level. Most pupils read with fluency and accuracy. A differentiated reading programme at instructional level would further promote pupils' reading competencies. A whole-school approach to process writing has been developed and some fine examples of pupils’ writing across a range of genres are evident. Teachers are commended for their continuous assessment of this work. Pupils' enjoy the recitation and exploration of poetry and they encounter a varied repertoire through the recently established Poetry Club.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of key mathematical concepts and processes. Mathematical language is developed in a consistent manner throughout the school. The recently introduced team teaching model, with further purposeful planning, will enhance differentiated provision for pupils. School-wide initiatives, such as the 'problem-solving marathon', facilitate pupils’ reasoning skills. The development of a whole-school approach to the promotion of higher-order thinking skills through a more structured differentiated programme for problem solving is recommended.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Music is very good. Pupils are afforded opportunities to explore aspects of all strands of the curriculum and their interrelated musical elements. The quality of pupils’ singing is praiseworthy. Their listening and responding skills are developed skilfully and they respond imaginatively to a range of
musical genres. Pupils' literacy skills are developed appropriately. The bi-annual school musical written and produced by teachers and pupils' participation in other external performances enhance their musical experiences.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The inclusive learning environment of the school promotes the holistic development of pupils with special educational needs. Learning environments are attractive and well-organised. However, consideration should now be given to the provision of more suitable accommodation for resource teaching. Intervention approaches, comprising a combination of withdrawal and in-class support, are usefully employed to support pupils. Pupils engage purposefully in well-planned and carefully structured learning activities. Some practice should be reviewed, however, so that programmes in support settings are based on the particular learning needs of pupils. The further use of diagnostic assessment would aid the identification of pupils' precise learning needs. In all instances learning targets should be specific and measurable. Further development of purposeful team-teaching models is advised.

- The home-school liaison teacher facilitates many initiatives to encourage parental involvement. Links with relevant community agencies are promoted productively. Resources from The School Completion Programme are used successfully to encourage pupils' continued participation in a range of school activities.

Published March 2012