

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Mulhuddart National School
Powerstown Road, Tyrellstown
Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 16675V**

Date of inspection: 29 September 2010



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

1. Introduction

Mulhuddart National School is a Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. Enrolment figures have increased rapidly in recent years and there are 273 pupils attending the school currently. It caters for a diverse student population. The school was originally located in Mulhuddart village. It is now housed in temporary accommodation in Tyrellstown. 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 is very supportive of the work of the school.
- The school is characterised by a welcoming and inclusive school community.
- The teaching staff works in a collegial manner to create a positive learning environment.
- The pupils enjoy learning and demonstrate pride in their work.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is commended.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- All school partners should engage collaboratively in whole-school planning and review.
- The duties of the in-school management team should be reviewed to enhance its curriculum leadership role.
- The cognitive language of EAL pupils should be systematically developed.
- Ní mór forbairt a dhéanamh ar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. *(It is recommended that pupils' language skills be further developed in Irish).*
- Pupils' progress should be more closely monitored and differentiation strategies should be employed to meet their varying learning needs.
- The further development of parental involvement in their children's education is recommended.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is good. Board members are assigned specific responsibilities which they discharge with dedication and commitment. The chairperson in particular is to be commended for his arduous work in managing the development of the school. The board of management has worked diligently to respond to the

rapid increase in enrolment in the school and to procure accommodation for pupils. Procedures are in place to manage school finances and accounts are certified annually. It is advised that vacant positions on the board of management be filled as soon as possible.

- At the time of the evaluation the deputy principal was acting in the capacity of principal pending the appointment of a new principal. The creation of a positive school atmosphere was central to his work. The work of the former principal is acknowledged in particular with regard to managing the transition of the school to its new location. The in-school management team works collegially and contributes conscientiously to the management of pupils and to the organisation of the school. It is recommended that their responsibilities be reviewed in order to maximise their curriculum leadership role and to ensure that duties are in line with the evolving needs and identified priorities of the school.
- The management of both human and material resources is good. Teachers are given opportunities to teach in both mainstream and support settings. It is advised that a policy be devised setting down criteria for the deployment of teachers to the different settings. The ancillary staff contributes significantly to the administration and maintenance of the school. The school is temporarily accommodated in a prefabricated building which is maintained to a good standard. Suitable learning environments are created in most classrooms.
- Positive relationships are promoted between all partners in the school community. The parents' association supports the school in a number of ways. The recently established school website could be further used to communicate with parents and to celebrate pupil achievement. Increased parental involvement in a broader range of school activities is recommended.
- A caring atmosphere is created in the school where pupils' self-esteem is nurtured. Questionnaires administered to pupils during the evaluation indicated that they enjoy school. A behavioural management system recently introduced is proving effective in the management of pupils. In some classrooms, however, proper protocol should be developed to ensure engagement in learning by all pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Some progress has been made in whole-school planning. There are a number of administrative policies in place, some of which are of good quality. Some policies require review to ensure that they are in line with current legislation. In general, curricular plans are generic in nature and need to be further contextualized to the needs of the school. It is now timely that all school partners engage collaboratively in strategic planning, identifying curriculum and organisational priorities for development and devising an action plan for implementation and review.
- There is scope for development in classroom planning. While teachers collaboratively plan for similar class levels consideration should be given to the varying learning needs of pupils in individual classes. It is also recommended that teachers plan explicitly for language development in each curricular area, considering the language needs of the majority of pupils. Monthly progress reports are maintained. A review of the current approach to maintaining monthly reports is required to advance school self-evaluation at classroom level.
- 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

- Tá dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge á chothú i measc na ndaltaí. Is inmholta mar a bhaintear úsáid rialta as an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil i gcuid de na ranganna. Ní mór an nós seo a leathnú ar fud na scoile. Tá sé ar chumas líon beag daltaí abairtí simplí a chumadh ach ar an iomlán tá deacrachtaí suntasacha ag a lán daltaí le foghlaim na Gaeilge. Cuireann easpa foclóra isteach ar a gcuid líofacht cainte. Ní mór a chinntiú go bhfuil na heiseamláirí teanga á mhúineadh go córasach ó rang go rang. Eagraítear gníomhaíochtaí oiriúnacha chun scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt i gcuid de na ranganna. Is fiú béim sa bhreis a chur ar an scéalaíocht agus ar an bhfilíocht i múineadh na Gaeilge. Múintear an léitheoireacht go córasach i gcuid de na ranganna. Ní mór an plean léitheoireachta a fhorbairt a thuilleadh agus téacsanna oiriúnacha a sholáthar do na daltaí, áfach. Scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil is mó a chleachtar i nGaeilge. Moltar scileanna saor-scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt ar bhonn níos céimniúla.
- A positive attitude to Irish is fostered among pupils. It is commendable that in some classes incidental Irish is used regularly. This good practice should be emanated in all classrooms. A small number of pupils can construct simple sentences in Irish but, on the whole, pupils have significant difficulties in learning the language. The lack of vocabulary inhibits their fluency. It is necessary to ensure that language exemplars are taught systematically throughout the school. In some classes suitable activities are organised to develop pupils' listening skills. Further emphasis should be placed on story and poetry in the teaching of Irish. Reading skills are taught systematically in some classrooms. There is a need to further develop the whole-school plan for reading and to acquire suitable reading material for pupils. Functional writing is practiced for the most part in Irish. Pupils' free writing should be developed more systematically.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. Pupils' oral competencies are developed through discrete oral language activities and cross curricular approaches. New language content should be taught in a systematic manner in order to incrementally develop all pupils' receptive and expressive language skills. In a number of classrooms, there is an urgent need to develop pupils' active listening skills. Further analysis of the standardised test results is recommended to appropriately support the systematic development of pupils' independent reading skills. Differentiated reading strategies are required to address pupils' varying learning needs at an instructional level. There is an over-reliance on the use of work book material and on functional writing activities in the majority of classrooms. A review of the school's writing policy should provide opportunities for pupils to regularly engage in independent writing activities across a range of appropriate genres. Particular attention should also be given to progression in pupils' penmanship and presentation skills. A whole-school approach to the assessment of pupils' writing would enhance pupils' skills.
- Satisfactory standards of teaching and learning in some aspects of Mathematics are in evidence in a number of classrooms. Some pupils display a good understanding of a range of concepts. Teachers are commended for their efforts to maximise the use of concrete materials in their teaching. Information and communication technology (ICT) is productively used for illustrative purposes and to generate pupils' interest and engagement. Further careful analysis of pupils' learning outcomes should be used to underpin the review of the mathematics' whole-school's plan. A greater emphasis should be placed on the specific language needs of a significant cohort of pupils. A whole-school approach to meaningful differentiated learning activities in mathematics should be adopted in the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning is good in some aspects of Physical Education. In general lessons are well structured and pupils enjoy the activities. In some instances however the warm-up activities are too long and do not allow for sufficient time for skills development. There is need to develop pupils' skills incrementally in all strands of the curriculum. A range of assessment strategies with appropriate criteria should be formulated to evaluate pupils' skills in the different strands of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In general, lessons are well-structured and appropriate resources are utilised to engage pupils in learning activities. In some instances, however, classroom management skills require development to ensure that all pupils are purposefully engaged in learning. It is recommended that assessment data be further analysed to plan differentiated programmes for pupils of varying abilities.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The recently revised provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school's learning-support policy is clearly devised with appropriate emphasis placed on the staged approach to intervention. Teachers develop suitable plans for pupils in collaboration with relevant partners and learning targets are, in general, well-identified. Lessons are well structured and appropriate resources are used. The further development of targeted in-class provision will greatly enrich pupils' learning.
- The quality of the teaching of English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Pupils are enabled to develop beneficial communicative language. The Primary School Assessment Kit is successfully used to identify initial language proficiency and to monitor pupils' progress thereafter. Individual profiles of proficiency are being developed to record pupils' progress in language skills. A common approach to teachers' long-term planning and preparation is in place. Short-term planning should be further developed to outline specific language objectives based on assessment outcomes. Some reorganisation of the in-class support should be considered to ensure that it is more appropriately focused on the pupils' greatest needs. There is some evidence of collaboration between language and mainstream class teachers. A more formalised system of communication should be developed to ensure a greater degree of collaboration. An increased focus should be placed on the development of pupils' cognitive language in order to facilitate their access to the mainstream curriculum.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

Mulhuddart National School has been through a dramatic period of change and growth over the last four years. The school has developing status and is increasing by approximately 60 pupils per year. There is a strong multicultural aspect, 75% of the school consists of foreign nationals, to the growth of the school. Additionally the school is based in a temporary premises with a planning permission granted for a new school and a possible commencement date of September 2012. A new principal was appointed in June 2011 and commenced duty in October 2011. The school is wonderfully placed to move forward now with a highly committed staff, a wonderfully supportive Board of Management and notable support from the Department inspector. The implementation of the W.S.E. recommendations will be fundamental to educational growth and development of the school. It is a sincere aspiration that the Department of Education will be in a position to provide the resources to fully support the school in the implementation of the W.S.E. recommendations. All partners are committed to providing the children with a meaningful and worthwhile education experience.

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 implementation of the circular 0008/2011 has allowed time for increased whole school planning – presently the English and handwriting policy are being reviewed by all partners.
- In the academic year 2011/2012 – the role of the inschool management – will be reviewed to enhance their curriculum leadership role. It ought to be noted that due to the moratorium on appointment to posts of responsibility that Mulhuddart National School has a significantly proportionally smaller inschool management team than other developed schools of equal size.
- Tá béim níos mó curaithe ar an nGaeilge neamhghoirmiúil chun forbairt a dhéanamh ar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge.
- A whole school approach to informal assessment is being introduced in order to monitor the progress of the pupils more closely and to assist in the development of differentiation strategies.
- A parent has recently been elected to the Board of Management as the fathers' representative. The Principal and the chairman of the Parents' Association meet regularly. The Principal meets with the Parents' Association committee regularly. Increased parental involvement in the children's education is being encouraged through a variety of means.