

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

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

**Scoil Náisiúnta Mhichíl,**  
**Newtown, Borris, Co. Carlow**  
**Uimhir rolla: 17462J**

**Date of inspection: 16 September 2013**



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

## 1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhichíl, Newtown, is a vertical, co-educational, rural primary school. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. The overall attendance levels of the forty-seven pupils enrolled is very good. 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, a number of whose members have been appointed recently, functions effectively and plays a significant role in the life of the school.
- The newly appointed principal fulfils her leadership role with commendable enthusiasm and dedication.
- The teachers successfully cultivate a positive classroom environment.
- The pupils are very well behaved and engage with high levels of interest in their learning.
- The school plays an important role in the local community and parents and the parents' association are very supportive of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Sa Ghaeilge, caithfear cumas tuisceana agus cainte na ndaltaí a threisiú trí deiseanna rialta fíor-chumarsáide a thabhairt dóibh. *The pupils' ability to understand and speak the Irish language should be developed through providing regular opportunities to engage in real-life communication.*
- In order to raise pupil achievement in English further, it is recommended that a more systematic approach to language and literacy learning be implemented at infant and junior levels.
- In providing for pupils with special educational needs, it is recommended that priority be given to providing in-class early intervention, particularly in the area of literacy.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management, a number of whose members have been appointed recently, functions effectively and plays a significant role in the life of the school. The board is commended for its involvement in the development and ratification of the school's organisational policies. It is now advised that the enrolment policy be reviewed to ensure full compliance with relevant legislation. To aid communication with parents, the board is praised for issuing an agreed report to the parents' association after each board meeting.
- The newly appointed principal fulfils her leadership role with commendable enthusiasm and dedication. She has a clear vision for the future development of the school and

promotes a positive school atmosphere and collaborative decision-making. The appointment of a deputy principal is pending.

- The school building and grounds are well maintained. The principal, in cooperation with the board of management, has recently progressed a number of praiseworthy developments regarding the school building. The improvement of classroom accommodation, the upgrading of the learning support room and the provision of an administrative office are noteworthy.
- In the senior classroom, a good range of teaching and learning resources is available and used well. There is a need to extend substantially the range of resources in the junior classroom and special educational needs setting, especially in relation to literacy.
- The school plays an important role in the local community and parents are very supportive of the school. The principal has introduced a number of new and worthwhile initiatives to update parents regarding school activities. The parents' association assists the smooth operation of the school through its support for extra-curricular activities. It also contributes to the provision of teaching and learning resources. The responses to the questionnaires confirm that all parents believe the school is welcoming of them, with almost all stating that the school is well run and that they are happy with the school.
- The pupils are very well behaved and engage with high levels of interest in their learning. In the questionnaires, a majority of pupils reported that they like school. All stated that they get on well with the other children and feel that their school is a good school.

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

- Whole-school planning is of an adequate standard. Aspects of curriculum plans drafted to date are useful in guiding teachers' classroom practice. All plans should be reviewed to ensure that they reflect more fully the specific context of the school, the curriculum content to be taught and the methodologies to be used. The school is well positioned to commence developing its practice in the area of school self-evaluation. Procedures for consultation with parents with regard to school planning and school self-evaluation should be established.
- Each teacher prepares long-term and short-term plans of work and monthly progress records. Teachers are advised to ensure a stronger focus on the intended learning outcomes for pupils and the extent to which these have been achieved. This will help to ensure a consistent whole-school approach to pupil learning.
- 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**

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement is of a competent quality overall. The teachers successfully cultivate a positive classroom environment and the pupils are eager and motivated. Some fine examples of well-structured, active and collaborative learning were observed and it is advised that such practices are implemented consistently. In the questionnaires, a majority of pupils reported that they enjoy their lessons and learning.

- The teachers draw on a suitable range of assessment tools to monitor individual pupil progress. In the questionnaires, almost all pupils reported that their teacher usually corrects their work and tells them how to improve it. While some differentiation practices were in evidence, the outcomes of assessment should be used to further inform planning for and addressing differentiation.
- Sa Ghaeilge, cé go mbaineann na hoidí dea-úsáid as raon straitéisí gníomhacha chun teanga na ndaltaí a neartú, tá gnéithe le forbairt i bhfoghlaim agus i ngnóthachtáil na ndaltaí. Caithfear a gcumas tuisceana agus cainte a threisiú trí deiseanna rialta fíor-chumarsáide a thabhairt dóibh. Chun an dul chun cinn seo a chur í bhfeidhm, ba chóir foclóir, frásaí agus struchtúir teanga a mhúineadh go córasach tríd an scoil. Léann cuid de na daltaí le tuiscint agus cleachtar an scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil go rialta.

*In Irish, while the teachers make good use of a range of active-learning approaches to progress the children's language skills, there is scope to develop pupil learning and achievement. Their ability to understand and speak Irish should be developed by providing regular opportunities to engage in real-life communication. In order to achieve this, it is advised that vocabulary, phrases and language structures be taught systematically through the school. Some of the children read with understanding and functional writing is practised regularly.*

- In the main, teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is satisfactory. Most pupils express their views and opinions confidently. The introduction of a systematic phonics programme in the junior classroom is welcomed. Satisfactory reading standards are in evidence. In the questionnaires, most pupils reported that they think they are doing well at reading. In middle and senior classes, praiseworthy work is being undertaken to develop the pupils' reading and writing skills. In order to raise pupil achievement further, it is recommended that a more systematic approach to language and literacy learning be implemented at infant and junior levels.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a good standard overall. Lessons are well structured and presented clearly. Some good use of mental mathematics and problem-solving was in evidence. These approaches should be employed consistently in all classes. The greater use of collaborative and differentiated approaches to learning would further benefit pupil progress. In the questionnaires, a majority of pupils reported that they think they are doing well at Mathematics.
- In general, teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared and the pupils engage actively in a range of appropriate learning activities. Pupils display a commendable understanding of the Geography of their locality and how it contrasts with other environments. The interactive whiteboard is used well to generate pupil interest and explain new concepts.

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

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is adequate. The lessons observed were structured appropriately and valuable use was made of active-learning approaches. The pupils engage well and supplementary teaching is provided in a caring environment.
- Programmes of learning are developed by the support teachers in consultation with class teachers. In these programmes, there is potential to increase the specificity of learning

targets. It is also advised that individual pupil progress be assessed consistently and clear records of progress maintained.

- Currently, supplementary teaching is provided solely through the withdrawal of pupils. It is recommended that existing practice be reviewed and priority be given to providing in-class early intervention, particularly in the area of literacy.