Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Mhuire na Dea-Chomhairle
Headford, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 17647V

Date of inspection: 10 June 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire na Dea-Chomhairle is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. The school is situated in Headford, Co. Galway. Boys and girls are enrolled from junior infants to second class. Only girls are enrolled from third class to sixth class. There are 106 pupils enrolled at present. The school building has recently been extended and refurbished. This has led to significant improvements in the facilities available in the school, although one mainstream classroom remains in a pre-fabricated building. The school is very well-maintained both inside and outside. 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:

- A positive learning atmosphere is fostered in the school. Each member of staff is committed to providing a broad and balanced education for pupils.

- The board of management works diligently to improve the facilities and services available in the school.

- The principal has made a highly commendable start in her role. She has established a very good working relationship with the entire school community. She is committed to maintaining and improving standards across the curriculum.

- A wide variety of effective teaching methods is used at each class level to ensure that pupils are well-motivated and that the quality of the learning process is enhanced.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good.

- The overall standards achieved in English are very good.

- The teaching and learning of Mathematics receives due attention, with most pupils achieving high standards.

- The quality of work covered in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Written reports on the progress of each pupil, from junior infants onwards, should be sent to parents at the end of each school year.

- Consideration should be given to establishing a parents’ association in the school to provide enhanced opportunities for parents to contribute to school life.

- The views of the patron, parents and teachers should be sought on amalgamating the school with the adjacent boys’ school.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and meets at least once a term. The school’s accounts are certified annually by an accountant. The board is to be commended for the recent work done on policy development and the school plan. The board’s current priority, now that the school building has been completed, is to develop the recreation area.

- The in-school management has recently undergone much change. A new principal was appointed in 2010. The principal is to be commended for the impressive start she has made in her post. Since her appointment, she has fostered very good relationships with the school staff and with the entire school community. She is a very competent and diligent classroom teacher. The principal has played a significant role in overseeing a comprehensive review of school plans and policies. Her vision for the school includes further improving the facilities available, particularly the outdoor facilities.

- The principal also wishes to work increasingly closely with the adjacent boys’ school to enhance the educational service offered to the Headford community. As part of this process, it is recommended that the views of the patron, parents and teachers be sought on the issue of amalgamating the two schools.

- A new deputy principal has recently been appointed in the school. The work of the deputy principal should make a valuable contribution to in-school management, adding to the commendable work already being carried out by the special-duties teacher.

- A wide range of educational resources is available in the school. These resources are effectively used to enhance the teaching and learning process. School personnel are deployed effectively. The diligent work of the school secretary and the other ancillary staff contributes effectively to the smooth running of the school.

- The statements of the parents’ representatives on the board of management and the results of parents’ questionnaires indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents regularly assist in many school activities. The school has organised meetings for parents to make them aware of changes to school policies and procedures. It is recommended, however, that a parents’ association be established to provide an official forum for parents to meet and discuss relevant school matters.

- Parents report that the school has an open and welcoming atmosphere. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. Written reports on the progress of their children are sent to the parents of pupils from third class onwards at the end of each school year. It is recommended that written reports be sent to the parents of all pupils, from junior infants to sixth class, at the end of each school year.

- The pupils in this school are very well-behaved. Pupils’ responses in questionnaires indicate that they are very happy in school. They feel that the school provides them with a good education. Pupils are very courteous and welcoming to visitors to the school. They are articulate and confident. They are keen to share and discuss what they have learned and the skills they have developed across the curriculum.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and self-evaluation process is very good. Much highly commendable work has been done on school self-evaluation in particular. This has led, for example, to a wide-ranging and beneficial review of the school plan. Many curricular
plans and school policies have been reviewed, updated and ratified by the board of management since the appointment of the new principal. A clear and targeted three-year action plan has been set out, which prioritises areas for further improvement.

- The quality of individual teacher planning throughout the school is very good. Each teacher regularly prepares appropriate long-term and short-term schemes of work. A monthly progress record of the work covered is maintained at each class 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

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. A wide variety of effective and imaginative teaching methods is used to enhance the learning process. Most pupils demonstrate impressive knowledge of the work covered. Teachers regularly monitor and correct pupils’ work. Praise and positive feedback are regularly used to encourage and motivate pupils.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith ar an iomlán i ngach rang. Cosaítear dearadh dearthach i leith na teanga ar fud na scoile. Leagtar beim chu ón chothó agus ar thorbairt scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí. Moltar go leagfaí a thulleadh béime, áfach, ar mhúineadh na bhfrásaí bunúsacha i gcuid beag de na ranganna. Tá caighdeán inmholt dearcadh fearrachtha agus scríbhneoir eachta sa Ghaeilge sroichte ag an gcuid is mó de na daltaí ó rang a dó ar aghaidh.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good overall in every class. A positive attitude towards the language is fostered throughout the school. Appropriate emphasis is placed on fostering and developing pupils’ oral-language skills. It is recommended, however, that more emphasis be placed on the teaching of basic phrases in a few classes. A commendable standard of reading and writing in Irish is attained by most pupils from second class onwards.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good overall. Very good emphasis is placed on oral-language development. The recital and writing of poetry receives creditable attention. Commendable preparatory work forms part of reading lessons in almost all classrooms. There is a need, however, to place more emphasis on consolidating new vocabulary in some classrooms. Neatly presented, high-quality written work is evident at each class level.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. A mathematics-rich environment has been developed throughout the school. Stimulating mathematical games form part of well-structured lessons at each class level. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing pupils’ problem-solving skills. Pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of the work covered across the various strands of the curriculum.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is good. Commendable collaborative work has been done on
developing a useful and sensitive school policy on SPHE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Lessons are imaginative and well-structured. Pupils participate eagerly in a wide range of interesting activities.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

   - The overall quality of support for pupils is very good. Very attractive and stimulating learning environments have been developed in the learning-support and resource classrooms. While the overall quality of learning-support and resource teaching is very good, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on ensuring that the service is more effectively co-ordinated.

*Published, December 2011*
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 Scoil Mhuire na Dea-Chomhairle welcomes this report. We commend the visiting inspector for his courtesy and professionalism. We believe the findings in the written report to be objective and fair. The report acknowledges the high standards achieved and the good practices which exist in the 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 school will ensure that, henceforth, written reports on the progress of each pupil, from junior infants onwards, will be sent to parents at the end of each school year.
- The school which has a long tradition of parental involvement, both formally through previous parents’ association groups and informally with the general parent body, will endeavour to establish a new parents’ association group before the end of the school year 2011-2012.
- The views of the patron, parents and teachers will be sought on amalgamating the school with the adjacent boys’ school.