1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire NS is a vertical co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. It is situated in Gowran village. The attendance levels of the 234 pupils are very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- Teaching and learning in Music are excellent.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The school has achieved notable success in improving attainment in this area.
- The principal and in-school management team successfully lead teaching and learning by implementing and reviewing whole-school programmes.
- The management of pupils is excellent; they present as confident young learners and demonstrate commendable achievement in the presentation of written work.
- The teachers provide a holistic education for all the pupils through a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- The teachers in special education settings provide high quality support for individuals and groups of pupils.
- The board of management significantly supports the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The teaching of reading should be reviewed. This review should focus on the development of specific reading skills at each class level with a view to advancing whole school attainment in reading.
- It is recommended that early-intervention strategies be implemented in infant classes to support the teaching of reading. In addition, provision for in-class support should be reviewed annually to meet the needs of targeted groups of pupils.
- The school should work closely with the parents’ association in order to improve communication and parental involvement in the life of the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management significantly supports the work of the school. There is good communication between the board and staff. The chairperson displays an in-depth knowledge of school administration and procedures. The board is well informed with regard to the pupils’ achievements and successes, most notably their continued
improvement in Mathematics. It also ensures that the building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. In accordance with Section 20 of the Education Act 1998, the board should establish procedures for informing parents on matters relating to the operation and performance of the school.

- The principal provides effective leadership. He exhibits well-developed administrative, organisational and interpersonal skills, promotes a spirit of professional reflection and is committed to the holistic development of the pupils. The deputy provides significant support to the principal and they successfully collaborate on management issues. The in-school management team have a shared vision for the development of the school and effectively lead teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

- The school has a wide range of teaching resources which are used consistently to support the pupils’ learning. It has placed significant emphasis on the acquisition of resources for information communication technology (ICT) and Music. The auxiliary staff carry out a wide range of duties competently.

- The management of pupils is excellent. Discipline is very good throughout the school and the pupils present as competent and confident learners. They are enabled to develop in a holistic manner throughout the provision of a wide variety of co-curricular and extra curricular activities. Responses to the pupils’ questionnaires indicate that they would appreciate greater involvement in relevant decision-making processes. It is timely for the school to establish an appropriate forum for pupils to contribute to decision-making.

- The management of relationships and communications within the school community is good. The school uses regular newsletters and the school’s website to inform parents of school activities and successes. The parents’ association arranges an annual fundraiser and supports the organisation of school celebrations and events. It is recommended that the school work more closely with the parents’ association in order to improve communication and parental involvement in the life of the school. It is further advised that all parents be issued with an annual, written, pupil-progress report.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good; planning for Music is excellent. The collaborative approach to whole-school planning, involving the board and staff, should encompass parental involvement, where practical. Strategies for differentiation and assessment should be addressed more comprehensively in all curriculum plans. In further developing the curriculum plan for Irish, the school is advised to specify desired learning outcomes for each year level.

- The staff has initiated the process of school-self evaluation. This has impacted positively on learning outcomes in Mathematics. The school has identified further areas for development in other curriculum areas; members of the in-school management team have plans underway to bring about these improvements. Staff meetings, informal meetings and review of assessment data are integral to this process.

- The quality of individual teachers’ planning is very good. It is closely aligned with whole-school planning and reflects the structure and format of the curriculum.
Child protection policy and procedures

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 and learning is very good. Lessons are carefully structured and include some pair and group work. Learning activities are well resourced and the very competent use of ICT in lessons is commended. The pupils are actively engaged in learning tasks and demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning. The quality of their written work, which is displayed in an attractive manner throughout the school, is of a very high standard.


The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Most teachers use lively, activity-based methodologies. The pupils’ vocabulary and communication skills are consistently developed. The pupils competently recite and sing a wide range of songs and poems in some classes. They achieve a high standard in reading. Most of them can read fluently and competently answer questions based on the text. The pupils engage in extended workbook-based comprehension activities. It is recommended that a greater variety of writing tasks be provided for pupils.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in oral language and writing in English is very good. Specific oral language lessons and guided writing experiences ensure that most pupils’ communication skills are capably developed. The pupils engage in process writing at all levels and write expressively in a wide range of genres. Appropriate early-reading skills are taught through the whole-class teaching of phonics and the use of varied-reading texts.

Most pupils display an enthusiasm for reading and the results of the pupils’ questionnaires indicate that most pupils think they are progressing well at reading. In order to advance attainment in this strand at whole-school level it is recommended that approaches to the teaching of reading be reviewed. As part of this review, consideration should be given to the teaching of specific reading skills, the role of the graded reader and the provision of targeted in-class support where necessary.

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Agreed whole-school approaches and consistency in the development of mathematical language has impacted significantly in raising pupil attainment in almost all classes. Assessment results indicate that the majority of pupils have mastered the key concepts of the curriculum. Lesson structures emphasise regular mental mathematics,
mastery of tables and the consistent use of manipulatives. These contribute most successfully in reinforcing the pupils' understanding.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is excellent. The pupils benefit from a broad and balanced programme with commendable attention to the teaching of literacy and composition. The pupils are enabled to listen and respond to a wide selection of music styles. The playing of musical instruments which includes the recorder, violin and guitar is of a high standard. Almost all pupils demonstrate an admirable capacity to explore and discuss the elements of music. The commitment by staff in the promotion of Music and in providing additional tutoring during school breaks is acknowledged and commended.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. A particular feature of competent practice includes targeted instruction to meet the needs of pupils who are withdrawn. Provision is guided by a comprehensive whole school plan. The proposed programme for accelerated learners is praiseworthy. Currently SEN provision caters for pupils from first to sixth class. It is recommended that early intervention strategies be implemented in infant classes to support the teaching of reading.

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