

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

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

**Scoil Mhuire,**  
**Raharney, County Westmeath**  
**Uimhir rolla: 18484B**

**Date of inspection: 16 May 2016**



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

## 1. Introduction

Raharney National School is a co-educational vertical school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school serves the educational needs of the village of Raharney and its environs. Current enrolment stands at 178 pupils, and attendance levels overall are very good. During this whole-school evaluation provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Drama was evaluated. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wishes to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **key findings**:

- The principal, effectively supported by the board, staff and parents, provides excellent leadership to the school.
- Overall, teaching and learning in the school are of a high quality.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are very good.
- Very high quality support is provided for pupils with additional learning needs.
- While teachers plan conscientiously for their teaching, short-term planning needs to document clearer learning objectives for each curriculum area along with appropriate provision for differentiation.
- Ar an iomlán, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge inmholta, le cleachtas thar a bheith éifeachtach i ranganna áirithe.  
*Overall, teaching, learning and pupil achievements in Irish are commendable with very effective practice evident in particular classes.*

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The teachers should devise an agreed whole-school approach to short-term planning to ensure the documenting of clearer learning objectives for each curriculum area along with appropriate provision for differentiation.
- Moltar do na hoidí go bhforbraítear scileanna urlabhra na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge i ngach rang, le tacaíocht ó chur chuige uile-scoile maidir le roghnú teanga do gach leibhéal ranga. *It is recommended that teachers develop the language skills of the pupils in Irish in every class, supported by a collaborative whole-school approach to the selection of language to be taught at each class level.*

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The work of the board of management is effective, resulting in the provision of a safe, attractive learning and working environment for pupils and staff. The board meets regularly and members are fully informed regarding organisational and curriculum matters. A strategic plan has been put in place to ensure the timely ratification and review of school policies. The provision of additional working space for the school is a current priority of the board.
- The principal provides excellent leadership. She demonstrates deep commitment to the school and uses her strong communication skills to promote high quality teaching and learning while ensuring the smooth running of the school. She is very ably supported by the in-school management team, comprising the deputy principal and one other staff member. They demonstrate very effective leadership in relation to their duties and responsibilities.
- The management of resources in the school is very good. Classrooms are very well resourced and display an attractive array of the pupils' learning achievements. The special needs assistant is deployed very effectively and gives very high quality support to pupils with additional learning needs. Ancillary staff contribute capably to the school's smooth operation.
- The parents' association provides commendable ongoing support to the school. In questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation, parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school.
- The management of pupils is of a very high quality. During the evaluation, pupil behaviour was excellent, and interactions between teachers and pupils evidenced high levels of mutual respect. Pupil voice is accommodated through the well-established Green Schools Committee. Responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate that almost all pupils think this is a good school.

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

- Whole-school planning is of a good quality. A range of administrative policies supports the smooth operation of the school. Curriculum plans are provided for all subject areas. The quality of the majority of these is very good and they generally offer clear guidance to teachers' classroom practice.
- All teachers provide plans to support their teaching. The quality of this planning is good overall. Teachers should ensure that long-term planning is derived more closely from the whole-school planning provided. It is advised that the teachers devise an agreed whole-school approach to the provision of short-term planning. This planning should include clearer learning objectives for each curriculum area along with appropriate provision for differentiation.
- The school has engaged positively with school self-evaluation. Improvement plans have been devised and implemented in literacy and numeracy. The current focus is on Social, Personal and Health Education. The school is advised to ensure that all targets are measurable so that progress can be monitored more easily.

- 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

- Overall, teaching, learning and pupil achievement are of a high quality, with some exemplary practice noted. The effective use of a range of methodologies, supported by the good use of teaching resources, ensures high levels of pupil participation. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation, most pupils agree that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Nonetheless, teachers are advised to make provision for more discovery-based learning and open-ended inquiry to support deeper understanding when planning activities for pupils.
- Ar an iomlán, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge inmholta. Sonraíodh cleachtas thar a bheith éifeachtach i ranganna áirithe. Ins na suímh is éifeachtaí, tugtar sách deiseanna do na daltaí teanga nua a chleachtadh i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla. Moltar don bhfoireann cur chuige uile-scoile a chur i bhfeidhm maidir le roghnú teanga do gach leibhéal ranga. Ní mór freisin go bhforbraítear scileanna urlabhra na ndaltaí de réir mar a théann siad tríd an scoil. Baintear roinnt úsáide as fíorleabhair chun scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Moltar an dea-chleachtas sin a leathnú agus na daltaí ag bogadh ar aghaidh tríd na meánranganna agus na hardranganna. Déantar freastal cuí ar fhorbairt scileanna scríbhneoireachta fheidhmiúla na ndaltaí, ach moltar cruthaitheacht a chothú a thuilleadh.
- *Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is commendable with very effective practice evident in particular classes. In the most effective settings, pupils are given ample opportunity to practise new language in different contexts. Teachers are advised to incrementally develop the language skills of the pupils in every class. A collaborative whole-school approach to the selection of language to be taught at each class level is also advised. Some provision is made for the use of real books in supporting the development of pupils' reading skills. This good practice should be extended as pupils progress through the middle and senior classes. Suitable provision is made for the development of pupils' functional writing skills, but creativity should be further fostered.*
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are very good. Teachers make very good provision for the development of pupils' oral language skills. The school places a high priority on the development of reading skills, and this is reflected in its cohesive approach to early intervention and guided reading. Reading attainments are very good overall. To further support this very effective work, reading material provided for pupils should be consistently matched to their assessed reading abilities. Excellent provision is made for the development of emergent writing skills, and pupils produce high-quality written work as they progress through the school.
- High quality teaching and learning are evident in Mathematics. Teachers use a range of methodologies to ensure clear teaching of concepts. Pupils display a good knowledge of number facts and strategies, and in some settings, a suitable emphasis is placed on consolidating the language of mathematics. While provision is made for activity-based learning, the overall teaching approach is mainly didactic. Teachers should explore methods to develop pupils' mathematical thinking skills and should provide further opportunities to cultivate estimation skills.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is good. All teachers provide discrete lessons, and drama is also used as a methodology in other curriculum areas. Pupils participate in a variety of drama games, and in the best practice observed, teachers made skilful use of drama conventions to explore pupils' knowledge and feelings. These approaches and exemplars of very good practice should be documented in the whole-school plan for Drama so that they can be shared among the staff.
- Standardised testing is used appropriately to monitor pupils' progress. Diagnostic testing is used effectively in assessing pupils' additional learning needs. Teachers utilise a wide range of assessment strategies to build comprehensive profiles of pupils' learning. Assessment data should be further used to inform differentiation in short-term planning. Existing best practice in the school in relation to classroom assessment should be identified and recorded in the whole-school assessment policy.

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

- Very high quality support is provided for pupils with additional learning needs. A balanced range of teaching interventions is utilised very effectively. Suitable emphasis is placed on early intervention. The quality of teaching is very high and this teaching is supported by comprehensive planning and assessment. The team collaborates very well. It is coordinated very effectively by the deputy principal who ensures that interventions are well-researched and implemented thoroughly. Individual support plans are well constructed, reviewed regularly and document progress for pupils.
- The school supports the pupils' holistic development very effectively. A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided, enriching the overall learning experience of pupils.

# **Appendix**

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management is pleased that this report acknowledges and affirms the exemplary and high quality teaching, learning and pupil achievement evident in the school. The Board believes that the report is a tribute to the commitment and dedication of the school staff, parents, pupils and BOM members both present and past.

## **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The Board of Management and staff welcome and acknowledge the recommendations of the inspection.

These are being systematically addressed as part of our ongoing process of continuous improvement.