Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Mhuiire
Taghmon, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Uimhir rolla: 18533L

Date of inspection: 20 January 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire is a four-teacher co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school serves the educational needs of the rural environs of Taghmon village and the outskirts of Mullingar town. Enrolment trends are stable and pupils' attendance is generally very good. As part of this evaluation the views of all parents and the opinions of pupils in middle and senior classes were collected, analysed and used as evidence in this report. 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:

- The board of management is well informed and provides valuable support for the school.
- The principal and deputy principal fulfil their designated roles very successfully, contributing to curricular, administrative and pastoral leadership.
- All staff members discharge their duties competently and conscientiously.
- The management of pupils is very good and classroom learning environments are cooperative.
- Communication between the parents' association and the school staff is very good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the school adhere to Department of Education and Skills Circular 07/03 with regard to the assignment of special-education posts.
- Moltar úsáid níos leithne a bhaint as comhrá beirte i ranganna áirithe chun caint neamhspleách a mhealladh ó na daltaí. It is recommended that paired conversation be used more widely in some classes to encourage pupils to speak independently.
- It is recommended that the areas of problem solving in Mathematics and designing and making in Science be prioritised to encourage pupils to apply their skills and knowledge more independently.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is well informed and it provides valuable support for the school. Board meetings are convened regularly and conducted according to correct
procedures. Financial statements are provided for each board meeting and the accounts have been certified by an independent accountant. The board has discussed, reviewed and ratified many aspects of school policy.

- The principal was appointed one year ago. She articulates a high quality vision for the school and she envisages the holistic development of the pupils in a stimulating learning environment with community support. The principal demonstrates very effective leadership skills and she enjoys the collaborative support of the staff. The deputy principal fulfils her designated roles very successfully, contributing to curricular, administrative and pastoral leadership.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. A useful range of educational resources has been provided to support discovery learning. The Department’s Summer Works Scheme has been used effectively to improve the building. The school employs a secretary, cleaning staff and two special-needs assistants, all of whom contribute to the smooth running of the school. The commitment of teachers to their own professional development is commendable.

- The parents’ association provides tangible support for the school through fundraising, provision of equipment and assistance with important school events. Communication between the parents’ association and the school staff is very good. In response to the Inspectorate questionnaire, most parents reported that they were well informed about the work of the association. Home-school communications are fostered effectively through the use of newsletters, a school information booklet and a text service.

- The management of pupils is very good and exemplary behaviour was noted among pupils. Classroom learning environments are co-operative and most pupils report that they like coming to school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good and is reflected in school procedures. All required administrative policies and some curriculum policies have been reviewed recently. It is recommended that a three-year planning calendar be devised with a view to having a more phased and sustainable policy review process.

- Classroom planning is very good, with learning objectives and teaching methodologies outlined clearly. Specific differentiation of lessons for pupils with additional needs was commended in some classrooms.

- There has been valuable analysis of data from standardised and diagnostic assessments. The impact of this analysis is evident in the provision of extra support for specific classes and subjects. The setting of specific, measurable and time-bound targets would further enhance the self-evaluation process.

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, learning and pupil achievement is good. Appropriate resources and methodologies are used during lessons to enable discovery learning. Most pupils report that they find their lessons and learning interesting and enjoyable.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go maith sa Ghaeilge. Leagtar na spriocanna foghlama amach go cruinn agus úsáidtear acmhainní chun tuiscint agus suim a chothú. Tugtar deiseanna éisteachta do na daltaí go rialta. Don chuid is mó, baintear úsáid as cur chuige cumarsáideach sna ceachtanna, ach moltar úsáid níos leithne a bhaint as comhrá beirte i ranganna áiríthe chun caint neamhspleách a mhealladh ó na daltaí. Léann tromlach na ndaltaí le tuiscint agus le muinín. Corthaítear scileanna scribhneoreachta go stuama agus tá dul chun cinn creidiúnach le sonrú. Baintear sult agus tairbhse as filiocht.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Learning targets are outlined accurately and resources are used to stimulate understanding and interest. Pupils are afforded regular listening opportunities. For the most part, the communicative approach is used in the lessons, but it is recommended that paired conversation be used more in some classes to encourage pupils to speak independently. Most pupils read with confidence and understanding. Writing skills are promoted effectively and good progress is apparent. Enjoyment and benefit are derived from poetry.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral language is developed purposefully at all levels. Reading standards are generally very good and reading materials are carefully matched to pupils’ needs. A love of reading is fostered through use of environmental print, class novels and collaborative learning methodologies. Writing skills are developed incrementally and pupils regularly draft and present their ideas in a variety of writing genres. Poetry is explored beneficially.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. The results of standardised attainment tests are analysed carefully to identify pupils in need of support teaching. There is praiseworthy emphasis on oral Mathematics and the accurate use of mathematical language. Praiseworthy use of collaborative and discovery-learning methodologies was noted at all levels. While most pupils undertake problem-solving activities logically, it is recommended that all pupils are taught suitable age-appropriate problem-solving strategies to promote greater confidence and competence.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. Lessons are presented through appropriate methodologies and pupils regularly undertake hands-on investigation in groups. Commendable emphasis is placed on the local environment. The provision of an allotment for the school by a member of the local community enables pupils to participate in gardening and observation of seasonal change. It is recommended that more designing and making activities be organised to encourage pupils to apply scientific skills and concepts independently.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- While school policies and practices foster the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, it is recommended that the school’s enrolment policy be revised so that it records the school’s observance of recent equality legislation with greater clarity.

- A comprehensive system of assessment enables the school to identify and assist pupils with additional learning needs. Individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) and individual education plans (IEPs) are devised collaboratively and reviewed regularly.

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very effective and these pupils are making very good progress in relation to their ability levels and agreed targets. Support is provided in the areas of literacy, numeracy and social development through a combination of withdrawal and in-class models.

- At the time of the evaluation, the principal was fulfilling the role of learning-support teacher. It is recommended that the school adhere to Department Circular 07/03 with regard to the assignment of special-education posts.

- Standardised, screening and diagnostic tests are administered and analysed appropriately. Classroom assessment records are maintained in relation to pupils’ progress in a number of curriculum areas. Results of standardised tests are disclosed and explained to parents in oral and written formats.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Effective systems of communication have been established and almost all parents report satisfaction with the arrangements for parent/teacher meetings.

Published, June 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 wishes to thank the Inspector for his courtesy and professionalism during his WSE visit to Scoil Mhuire, Taghmon. The BOM welcomes the very positive findings of the report which affirms its opinion of the very good work, high standards and commitment that prevail in this 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 report has carefully been studied by the BOM and the staff. The constructive recommendations will be used as a basis for ongoing school improvement.

Department of Education & Skills circular 07/03 will be adhered to from September 2011.

A greater emphasis has been placed in all classes on “comhrá beirte” and all teachers are also emphasising the teaching of problem-solving strategies in Mathematics, having attended an in-service course in mathematical strategies.