

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Mhuire
Convent Road
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 18602E**

Date of inspection: 24 March 2011



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

1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire Clondalkin, under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin, is situated in Clondalkin village and shares its campus with three other schools. Almost one third of 326 pupils enrolled do not have English as their first language. The school is co-educational from infants to first class and girls only from second to sixth class. A significant number of pupils missed more than twenty days over the past two years. The recently reviewed attendance policy is having a positive impact on attendance levels in the current school year. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- There is a strong sense of team work and collegiality evident in the school. The staff succeed in meeting the pupils' pastoral care needs in a positive atmosphere.
- The principal uses her comprehensive knowledge of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) to lead curriculum development in the school. She is capably supported by members of the in-school management team.
- The board of management, parents and auxiliary staff significantly support the work of the school.
- An effective model of in-class support for literacy has been established; the organisation of station teaching is praiseworthy.
- The pupils' oral language skills are developed effectively: they are articulate communicators and display very good presentation skills.
- The school has achieved steady and measurable success in raising the pupils' achievement levels in reading over recent years.
- The quality of whole-school curriculum and organisational plans is very good.
- The teachers present well paced, engaging lessons which are supported by a wide range of resources.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that teachers in all settings adopt an objectives-based approach to planning which is closely aligned with the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and takes full account of the varying abilities of pupils.
- A more systematic approach to assessment at whole-school and individual class level is required and the outcomes of assessment should be utilised to inform future planning and teaching.
- Whole-class teaching approaches should be complemented by more group-based teaching, including ability groups.
- In the teaching of Mathematics, it is recommended that differentiated programmes of learning be put in place based on pupils' abilities and be thoroughly reinforced and assessed on an ongoing basis.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management discharges its duties in a professional manner and is very supportive of the work of the school. It communicates effectively with the staff and wider school community.
- The principal demonstrates very good organisational and administrative skills. Her comprehensive knowledge of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and its associated pedagogy enable her to develop whole-school approaches particularly in the area of literacy.
- The substantial in-school management team, comprising eleven teachers, meet regularly and a strong spirit of team work is evident among them. Their duties are in line with the needs of the school. It is recommended that the curriculum leadership aspect of their roles be developed to include the monitoring of the impact of whole-school initiatives on pupils' learning outcomes.
- The management of resources is very good. The grounds are maintained to a high standard. The auxiliary staff carry out a wide range of duties competently to support the school. There is an extensive selection of resources to support teaching and learning. Considerable investment has been made in acquiring and organising resources for literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT).
- Very good relationships and communications exist at all levels of the school. It receives considerable support from the highly-committed, long-standing parents' association. Responses to parent questionnaires indicate that almost all parents feel there are good structures in place to meet with teachers and that parents feel welcomed in the school and are happy with the school overall.
- The teachers manage the pupils in a caring and enabling manner. In many classes the pupils are very attentive and display very good levels of participation. Most of the pupils surveyed like coming to school and feel they get on well with the other pupils in the school. Almost all pupils feel safe in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good. A collaborative process is adopted in policy formation. Comprehensive organisational plans are evident. Whole-school curriculum plans are of a very good quality. They clearly outline progressive programmes of learning.
- All teachers use an agreed theme-based approach to their individual planning. These plans should be more closely informed by the content and layout of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and provide clarity on the programmes of learning at each class level as laid out in the whole-school plan. It is recommended that all teachers adopt an objectives-based approach to planning which takes full account of the varying abilities of pupils.
- Processes of school self evaluation are established in the school including review, collaborative planning, programme planning and implementation, and collation of data. These data, collated at whole school level, should be used to more closely inform the provision of targeted support to pupils. In addition, more systematic use of assessment is required to ensure that programmes and initiatives are having the desired outcomes in terms of learning.

- 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 quality of teaching and learning varies. Aspects of competent practice by teachers include clear explanations, high levels of pupil engagement, appropriate learning activities and well structured and well-paced lessons. Whole-class teaching approaches should be complemented by more group-based teaching, including ability groups. There is need for new content and skills to be thoroughly consolidated through the use of supportive learning environments and the ongoing revision of key content and skills.
- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán teagaisc agus foghlama na Gaeilge go maith. Úsáidtear réimse cuí modhanna múinte agus acmhainní san ceachtanna. Aithrisíonn agus canann an cuid is mó de na daltaí rainn, dánta agus amhráin go cumasach. Tá réimse leathan foclóra acu agus tá sé ar a gcumas ceisteanna, bunaithe ar ábhar atá múinte, a fhreagairt. D'fhéadfaí tuilleadh forbairt a dhéanamh ar chumas na ndaltaí comhrá a choinneáil. Ba chóir do gach oide na heiseamláirí teanga atá le múineadh a leagadh amach sna pleananna agus a chinntiú go ndaingnítear an teanga atá foghlamtha i rith na gceachtanna. Tugtar taithí chuí do na daltaí sa léitheoireacht, sa scríobhneoireacht agus sa ghramadach.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A suitable range of methodologies and resources is utilised in lessons. Most pupils can perform a variety of poems and songs capably. They have a good range of vocabulary and can answer questions on aspects of content taught. There is scope for development in the pupils' ability to sustain conversations. All teachers should specify language exemplars to be taught in their planning and ensure thorough consolidation of language learned during lessons. The pupils experience appropriate programmes regarding reading, writing and grammar.

- Very good standards are achieved in oral language in English through the provision of a themed-based approach to language enrichment. Overall, the pupils are confident and articulate communicators and display impressive presentation skills. Early-reading skills are taught effectively and these skills are developed with competence up through the school. The station model of in-class support ensures that the key skills in English are progressively taught.
- All pupils experience writing in a range of genres. Some very good samples of the pupils' writing across the curriculum are displayed. This good work would be further enhanced with in-depth engagement in the process of writing in a specified range of agreed genres.
- Overall, the quality of teaching in Mathematics is satisfactory. Lessons incorporate good teacher modelling, use of resources, mental mathematics and good emphasis on problem solving. Whole-class teaching predominates, with no provision for group teaching. A significant number of pupils do not display competence across the strands of Mathematics. In order to raise achievement levels, differentiated programmes of learning need to be put in place for groups of pupils based on the outcomes of assessment.

Concepts need to be thoroughly consolidated and systematically assessed on an ongoing basis.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Geography is satisfactory. Theme-based programmes are planned. Good provision is evident in learning about communities, both local and overseas. Through the school's successful participation in the Green Schools' Programme the pupils have deepened their knowledge of environmental issues. Lessons are primarily teacher-directed. It is recommended that lessons are planned based on curriculum objectives for the class level in question. Fieldwork, skills-based learning and the use of maps and globes should be intrinsic to the geography programme.
- Assessment modes include teacher-designed tests, standardised testing and teacher observation. Regular formative assessment is required. These assessment outcomes should be used to inform future planning and teaching.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The special education needs team provides very good supports for pupils. A well developed model of team-teaching is delivered to all pupils in literacy. These highly organised interactive sessions are capably delivered and are supported by excellent resources. A number of individuals and groups of pupils are withdrawn for additional support in well-resourced settings. Using the outcomes of diagnostic assessments and whole-school data, the team should regularly review groups in receipt of interventions.
- There are very good supports for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school is welcoming of pupils from a diverse range of cultures and celebrates interculturalism during planned events throughout the year.
- Through the work of the school completion programme co-ordinator a range of appropriate supports is put in place for targeted pupils. These include courses, clubs and camps.

Published September 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 of Scoil Mhuire, Clondalkin, welcomes this Whole School Evaluation which highlights the strengths of our school. We wish to thank the inspectors for the professional manner in which the inspection was conducted and for their courtesy.

We welcome the affirmation of the strong sense of team work and collegiality and the very good relationships and communication evident at all levels in Scoil Mhuire. In particular, we acknowledge the report's affirmation of how the Board of Management, parents and auxiliary staff significantly support the work of the school.

We are pleased that the in-class support for literacy has been highlighted as effective and that the initiatives undertaken to raise the pupils' achievement levels have resulted in steady and measurable success.

We are heartened that the work of the S.E.N. team in providing very good supports for pupils, including pupils who speak English as an additional language, is acknowledged. In the tradition of the Presentation ethos, Scoil Mhuire has always been and continues to be welcoming of pupils from a diverse range of cultures and celebrates interculturalism in a variety of ways and events. The Board acknowledges the ongoing support provided by the school completion co-ordinator and the school completion services.

The Board acknowledges and appreciates the support of the parents and in particular the highly-committed, long-standing parents' association.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

As reflective practitioners, we plan to continue our review of teacher planning in all settings in the context of our whole-school planning which is based on the Primary School Curriculum (1999).

The teaching of Mathematics had been identified at both staff and Board level as a priority area for the school year 2011-2012. Already an intervention plan and in-class support has been put in place. This will be continued in the coming school year and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Our assessment policy will be reviewed to reflect the changing needs of the school. In our whole-school approach we will continue to use a continuum of assessment methods to incorporate assessment of and for learning.

Arising from a review of the attendance policy and an awareness of the rate of absenteeism, the Board, in conjunction with the School Completion Programme, put in place an additional intervention last September aimed at targeting families most at risk of absenteeism including those with persistent patterns of low attendance. In addition to the normal daily attendance record, an early morning check is made of the targeted children. If they are absent, parents are phoned immediately. Positive measures are in place to encourage good attendance. There is

evidence to indicate that our new measures are having positive effects in reducing absentee rates. We plan to continue this targeted intervention during the coming school year.

The Board of Management congratulates the staff, pupils and parents of Scoil Mhuire and assures them of its commitment and on-going support.