

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Scoil Mhuire gan Smál  
Cladach Dubh, Co. na Gaillimhe  
Uimhir rolla: 18608Q**

**Date of inspection: 14 May 2013**



## 1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Cladach Dubh, is a co-educational primary school situated in the parish of Claddaghduff, Co. Galway. It is a rural DEIS school. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam.

The school has two mainstream class teachers. There are 35 pupils enrolled and pupils' attendance patterns have improved in the last few years and are now very good. The school was extended and refurbished in 2007. This work included the provision of a new classroom, as well as the refurbishment of a range of facilities in the school. Since then, however, the numbers enrolled in the school have decreased, mainly due to rural depopulation and the lack of employment in the local area.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama. 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 very supportive of the work of the school.
- There is a positive learning atmosphere in the school.
- Each member of the school staff works hard to provide a broad and balanced education for the pupils.
- School self-evaluation procedures are good. The school's DEIS Action Plan is being effectively implemented.
- A good standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evident in the curricular areas evaluated.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To raise literacy standards, a school-wide oral language programme should be implemented and monitored, reading lessons should be re-structured, and greater emphasis should be placed on developing pupils' comprehension skills.
- More emphasis should be placed on improving pupils' attitude to and confidence in Mathematics.
- The learning-support and resource service should be reviewed, with greater emphasis on addressing pupils' specific learning needs and the implementation of a more structured programme of early intervention.

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

- The board of management is properly constituted and usually meets regularly throughout the year. The board is very supportive of the work of the school. The board provides valuable support to the principal and teachers. Board members have been assigned a range of specific roles. The school's accounts are well maintained and are certified annually. The board's main priority is to maintain the school's good standing in the community and to ensure that a broad and balanced education is provided for each pupil.
- The principal is to be commended for overseeing a wide range of improvements in school facilities in the past number of years. Each teacher in the school is committed to providing a broad and balanced education for pupils. The teachers demonstrate a willingness to implement change and to continually strive to improve standards.
- The work of the classroom assistant, the part-time secretary and the part-time caretaker makes a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.
- There is an active and well-organised parents' association in the school. Parents are involved in a variety of school activities and events, particularly in after-school activities for pupils. The results of parents' questionnaires indicate that overall parents are happy with the school. They feel that the school is helping their children to progress with reading and in Mathematics. Communication between the school and parents is maintained through regular newsletters and texts from the principal. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually to discuss pupils' progress. A written report on the progress of their children is sent to parents at the end of each school year.
- The quality of pupil management in the school is good. Pupils at each class level eagerly participate in the activities and lessons organised. Pupils' questionnaires indicate that they think this is a good school, that their teachers explain things clearly, and that their teachers tell them how to improve their work. The questionnaires also indicate, however, that pupils have a more positive view of their own ability in reading than in Mathematics. It is recommended that the school consider ways to foster a more positive attitude to Mathematics to improve pupils' confidence and achievement.

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

- The whole-school planning process is good. Administrative policies are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are relevant and specific to the needs of the school. The school's anti-bullying policy has recently been updated.
- As a DEIS school, the school's self-evaluation processes are well-established. The DEIS Action Plan is being implemented effectively and the school's determination to raise literacy standards is ongoing. Parent surveys have assisted in this work. While the school has identified oral language and comprehension as priorities for improvement, aspects of this work need to be more focused. It is also recommended that the emphasis on improving literacy standards be balanced with improving standards in Mathematics.
- The quality of classroom planning is good. Each teacher prepares long-term and short-term plans. A monthly record of the work covered is maintained. A range of assessment modes is in place in the school. There is a need, however, to use assessment data in an even more purposeful way to target pupils' specific learning needs.

- Confirmation was provided by the school authorities that the Board of Management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, without modification or amendment, 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

- The quality of teaching and learning across the curricular areas observed is good, with some very good teaching and learning evident. Each teacher employs a variety of effective teaching methods. It is recommended, however, that some lessons and activities be more effectively differentiated to cater for the range of pupil abilities.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith ag gach rang leibhéal sa scoil. Baintear úsáid as modhanna múinte éifeachtacha chun spéis na ndaltaí a mhúscaill sa Ghaeilge. Leagtar béim chuí ar mhúineadh na mbunabairtí sna ranganna uile. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá saothar maith cruthaitheach agus feidhmiúil le sonrú i scríbhneoireacht na ndaltaí.

*The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good at each class level in the school. Effective teaching methods are used to motivate pupils' interest in Irish. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the teaching of basic sentences in each class. Pupils' reading standards in Irish are good. Good creative and functional work is evident in pupils' writing.*

- The quality of the teaching and learning of English is good overall, although there is scope for development in raising reading standards across the school. While attention is given to developing pupils' oral language skills, there is a need to more effectively implement, assess and monitor the school's programme for oral language. Reading lessons should be restructured to include more emphasis on questioning, discussion, word exploration, and consolidation. The implementation of early intervention strategies and the school's intention to improve pupils' comprehension skills should assist in addressing this need. The school library and class libraries are well-stocked with a wide variety of books. Each teacher regularly monitors and corrects pupils' written work. Pupils' handwriting is good to very good at each class level.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Some very good practice is evident. Number games are skilfully used in the junior classroom to enhance the learning process. In the senior classes, lessons are effectively differentiated to cater for the needs of each class group. Active learning and concrete materials are effectively used to inculcate concepts. There is a need, however, to prioritise Mathematics and its central role in pupils' learning further. While a mathematics-rich environment is evident in classrooms, it is recommended that this be further developed throughout the school. While some opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in talk and discussion during mathematics lessons, this needs to be expanded. There is a need to place more emphasis on the presentation of Mathematics work in pupils' copybooks in some cases.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is good, with much very good work evident. Lessons are well-structured and provide pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their oral language skills through very good role play. A Christmas concert is organised annually. To further enhance the effectiveness of the school's Drama programme, it should be more purposefully linked to the school's oral language programme.

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

- The quality of teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs is good in many respects. It is recommended, however, that the learning-support and resource provision in the school be reviewed. As part of this review, a structured programme of early intervention should be implemented to address pupils' needs as soon as possible when they start school.

*Published October 2013*

# **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 Claddaghduff NS wishes to thank the inspector for his work carried out during our recent WSE. The board is very pleased with the report and wish to acknowledge the help and support of the Parents' Association in our 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**

We welcome the observations of the inspector and have started work on the recommendations outlined. We remain as always dedicated and committed to ensuring our school continues to be a caring, happy, safe, stimulating environment for our pupils, our staff, our parents and the wider school community.