An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta na Carraige
Carrick, Co. Donegal
Roll number: 18611F

Date of inspection: 26 January 2012
1. **Introduction**

Scoil Náisiúnta na Carraige is a co-educational, Catholic Gaeltacht primary school, which is under the patronage of the Bishop of Raphoe. 106 pupils attend the school and the school rolls indicate a satisfactory attendance level. Although this school is situated in the Gaeltacht, most of the pupils come to school with little Irish as there has been a decline in the number of families who speak Irish in the home. The school participates in the Language Assistants Scheme which is funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and is involved also in the school support programme Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools (DEIS). The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Music. The board of management 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 functions at a very good level.
- The principal fulfils her duties effectively.
- The standard of teaching, learning and the attainment of pupils is very good in Irish and effective in English, Mathematics and Music.
- There is effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs in the learning support rooms.
- The school staff works together co-operatively to provide effective teaching and learning for the pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the staff sets down strategies with specific targets in an intervention plan for literacy and numeracy.
- It is recommended that an annual school report on the pupils’ progress be sent home to the parents, in line with circular 0056/2011 of the Department.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management functions at a very good level. The chairperson and the members of the board play an active role in the administration of the school and they give very good support to the teachers. The members have specific responsibilities. A report on expenditure is given at every board meeting but it would be worthwhile to certify the school accounts annually. The board fulfils its responsibilities regarding the promotion of
Irish, in line with paragraph 9 of the Education Act, by supporting the cultural and language events of the school.

- The principal fulfils her curricular leadership and administrative responsibilities effectively. The in-school management team works with understanding in their posts of responsibility. It would be opportune now to review the responsibilities of the team in order to focus on the priorities of the school regarding curricular matters.

- The board and the school community are commended on the development of the building and especially on the wide range of teaching and reading resources that are available and are being used effectively by the teachers. It would be worthwhile for the learning support team to make use of the two classrooms that are within the school building for teaching rather than the two prefabricated buildings that are beside the school.

- The parents play an active role in the life of the school. The parents’ committee supports the board and the school staff to advantage. There is good communication between school and home. A high number of parents indicated, in their replies to the questionnaires that were circulated as part of the whole school evaluation, that teaching was good in the school and that their children were doing well.

- The pupils are being managed very effectively and there is a very respectful atmosphere discernible in the school. In the questionnaires that were circulated as part of the school evaluation, a large number of the pupils considered this to be a good school and that matters are explained clearly in the lessons.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. The statutory and administrative policies are of a satisfactory standard and school planning is done on a co-operative basis. It is recommended that the policies are shared with parents in order to seek their views before they are ratified at board level. A DEIS action plan has been laid down with targets identified for all areas and a good number of them has been activated. It is recommended that further analysis be done on the assessment results in order to focus on raising the standards in literacy and numeracy. It would be worthwhile to outline specific intervention targets in the school plan for putting into effect methods such as in-class group teaching and station teaching.

- Good efforts are being made in the school regarding self-assessment. It is recommended that the monthly progress reports’ system in the school be reviewed to further facilitate school self-assessment.

- The standard of classroom planning is good. As appropriate, it is compatible with the learning aims of the curriculum and directed towards the learning needs of the pupils. It is recommended that the use of technology and communication be integrated with planning and that e-learning be developed progressively from class to class.

- 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

- In Irish, the quality of teaching, learning and the attainment of pupils is very good. Although Irish is not the first language of the majority of pupils, it is commendable how the teachers succeed in teaching the language with a special ability. Worthwhile opportunities are afforded to the pupils to practise the Irish that they have learned. The pupils in the lower section have a good fluency and the majority of pupils in the middle and senior sections have achieved very good standards of fluency. Also, the majority of pupils have achieved a high standard in reading and comprehension. It is obvious from the samples that were observed that the pupils have achieved a very high standard in writing. The majority of pupils know a wide range of Irish rhymes and poems and they are able to recite them confidently.

- The standard of teaching in English is high. Oral communication skills are developed effectively. While the majority of pupils read in a competent manner, there is scope for improvement in the attainment of a small number of pupils in every class. It is recommended that literacy stations be established to support pupils in working at their own ability level thus maximising individual progress. Varied initiatives are undertaken to promote the habit of reading in the school. Pupils’ comprehension skills are developed skilfully and their ability to scan text and analyse content is good. While the pupils’ functional and creative writing skills are very good in the middle and senior classes, there is scope for development in the promotion of pupils’ emergent writing skills in the junior classes. The staff should implement whole-school approaches to penmanship.

- The standard of teaching, learning and the attainment of pupils in Mathematics is effective but there is scope for developing the progress of a small number of pupils in every class. Every teacher has set down very clear plans with targets to consolidate the participation and the activity of pupils in the learning. It is recommended that the group teaching that has been initiated in the lower classes be extended to all classes in the school in a structured manner, in order that specific targets will be achieved by the pupils in all classes.

- The teaching of Music is undertaken competently and the pupils are making satisfactory progress. A music tutor gives support to the pupils, in order to develop their literacy and instrumental skills. The pupils listen to the works of the major composers and they enjoy the musical activities.

- The quality of teaching, learning and the attainment of pupils in general is effective. The teachers employ active teaching methods that are focused on the abilities and requirements of the pupils in order to meet their needs progressively. The full participation of the pupils in the teaching and learning is cultivated but there is scope to improve the participation of the pupils with particular learning needs in the mainstream classes. Very creditable use is made of information and communication technology in some classes and it is recommended that this good practice be extended to every class. The pupils undertake their work enthusiastically and they indicate interest in the learning. In the questionnaires the majority of pupils agreed that they were succeeding well in reading but a high number of pupils considered that they do not change their work after it is corrected by the teachers.

- The quality of assessment is very good. The results of the assessment tests show that the attainments of the majority of the pupils in English and Mathematics are ranging from good to very good scores. The results of school-based tests indicate that very good progress is being made in Irish. It is recommended that standardised tests are organised for Irish. Screening tests are done with the junior pupils to identify their strengths and
weaknesses and to plan learning targets. The staff holds an annual meeting with parents to discuss the pupils’ progress but it is recommended that a written report be sent home to the parents in line with circular 0056/2011 of the Department. It is recommended that the staff arranges self-assessment strategies for the pupils in every class.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The provision for pupils with learning needs is effective. Three support teachers attend to focusing on the needs of individual pupils. Two of the teachers are shared with other schools in the area. *Reading Recovery* is functioning very effectively in the school. In-class teaching is in operation. The special needs assistants work diligently in their support for particular pupils.

- A book rental scheme is in place in the school. A lunch is provided with support grants from the Department of Social Protection.

*Published June 2012*
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management
This is a translation of the School Response that was submitted in Irish

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Whole School Evaluation was of very good help to the school in terms of affirming good practice and outlining new objectives for the 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

An annual report on pupil progress will be sent home to parents at the end of this school year.

The standardised tests for Irish have been completed.

In relation to the use of the two classrooms that are within the school building as classrooms for the learning support staff, it is not feasible at present to do this, due to increasing enrolments and another mainstream classroom may be needed.