

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

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

**Scoil Naisiúnta Muire gan Smál**  
**Curry, County Sligo**  
**Roll Number: 19389M**

**Date of inspection: 21 February 2013**



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

## 1. Introduction

SN Muire gan Smál is a co-educational school which caters for 88 pupils. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Achonry. Patterns of enrolment are currently steady. The majority of pupils enrolled are from the local catchment area. Attendance in the school is good.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of learning and teaching in Gaeilge, English, 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 school has a hard-working, committed and very competent staff, comprising teachers and special needs assistants, who work in a unified manner to provide a broad educational experience for the pupils.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish, English and Mathematics is very good.
- The level of pupil engagement in learning is highly commendable.
- The pupils are eager to communicate and display high levels of competence in oral Irish.
- Teachers have been very successful in developing pupils' literacy skills and positive attitudes to reading.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil management in support settings is very good.
- A pleasant atmosphere prevails in all classrooms, pupils are appropriately managed and positive pupil-teacher relationships are evident.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management should meet the minimum requirement of five meetings a year and should ensure that a treasurer's report is presented at each meeting.
- The school should review its in-school management structures to include more pro-active leadership, particularly in organizational matters. A contract for the duties assigned to the deputy-principal should be devised in line with Primary Circular 07/03.
- Teachers should consider the use of differentiated texts and a more streamlined approach to the teaching of phonological awareness in consideration of the very wide range of reading ages in each classroom.
- Teachers should place a greater emphasis on independent, creative writing across the curriculum which encompasses a range of writing genres to accommodate the pupils' high standards and the development of their literacy skills.

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

- The quality of the work of the board of management is good. The board meets on a regular basis but rarely meets the minimum requirement of five meetings a year. Minutes of meetings are maintained. A treasurer's report should be provided at each meeting. School accounts are certified annually. The physical environment of the school reflects the ongoing commitment by the board to the development of the school building and grounds.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is good. The principal leads a hard-working, committed and competent staff. There is, however, scope for more proactive leadership, particularly in organizational matters. The in-school management team, comprising the principal and deputy-principal, works effectively. The deputy-principal provides invaluable assistance to the principal by undertaking a range of duties. There is a need to establish a contract for such a post with regular formal reviews of the duties in line with Primary Circular 07/03.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school building and grounds are maintained to the highest standard. Two special needs assistants work very effectively with the teaching staff to support the needs of individual pupils. The school has increased its technological resources in recent years and these are used to good effect. There are currently two teachers who job-share. Their level of collaboration is commendable.
- The quality of home-school communication is good. Parents are kept informed of the progress of their child through annual parent teacher meetings and an end-of-year written report. The school also issues newsletters and provides information through its newly developed website. The recently re-established parents' association will be an additional forum for parents and should enhance the involvement of parents in the planning process.
- The quality of pupil management is very good. Positive relationships between pupils and teachers were evident during the evaluation and a pleasant atmosphere prevailed in all classrooms. Pupils were appropriately managed at all times. Pupil questionnaire responses revealed that a large majority of pupils feel safe in their class and in the playground, and they agree that pupils behave well.

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

- The quality of the school planning is good. The staff has devised a number of concise and informative plans and policies which inform day-to-day practice. It is necessary to implement a systematic approach to school planning to ensure a cyclical review of the school plan, informed by legislation, department circulars and national guidelines.
- There is scope to actively involve parents in the planning process through the parents' association, and as part of the school self-evaluation process which is currently in its infancy. It would be helpful if the results of a questionnaire issued to parents as part of the evaluation process were used as a basis for discussion by the board, staff and parents' association in the coming months as part of the school's self-evaluation process.
- The quality of teacher planning is very good and has been adapted in recent months to accommodate a whole-school approach. Planning is most effective where teachers plan for pupil outcomes using curriculum documents, rather than textbook content. There is

extensive differentiated planning in literacy and Mathematics for pupils with resource hours. Such practice is highly commended.

- 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

- Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go han-mhaith. Baintear feidhm fíor-éifeachtach as nuacht na maidne mar mhodh múinte agus tá caighdeán labhartha na ndaltaí an-ard dá réir. Tá a rannpháirtíocht go han-mhaith agus tá féinmhuinín acu agus iad ag cur iad féin in iúl trí Ghaeilge. Leagtar béim ar rannta, dánta agus amhráin i bhformhór na ranganna. Úsáideann múinteoirí an Ghaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúl i rith an lae. Tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta níos airde sna ranganna ina mbíonn deiseanna ag na daltaí scríbhneoireacht chruthaíocht a dhéanamh go rialta. Moltar do mhúinteoirí réimse níos leithne de thascanna scríbhneoireachta a thabhairt do na daltaí, nach bhfuil bunaithe ar théacsleabhair, chun dúshláin a thabhairt dóibh.
- *In Irish, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers make very effective use of 'morning news' as a teaching approach and pupils' oral competence is very high as a result. Pupils participate very well and are confident expressing themselves through Irish. Teachers in most classes emphasize rhymes, poems and songs. They use Irish informally through the school day. The standard of written Irish is higher in classes where pupils have regular opportunities to engage in creative writing tasks. It is recommended that teachers broaden the range of writing tasks for pupils, with less emphasis on textbook exercises, to challenge the pupils.*
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Pupils' literacy skills are developed incrementally and pupils display very positive attitudes to reading. Teachers should consider the use of differentiated texts and a more streamlined approach to the teaching of phonological awareness having consideration for the very wide range of reading ages in each classroom. The pupils are provided with opportunities to write and the quality of their writing is very good. Consideration should be given to a whole-school approach to the writing of different genres. Pupils' written work is regularly monitored in most classes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Teachers present material in a clear, sequential manner and relate it to pupils' experiences. Pupils are adept at number facts. Teachers should place a more explicit focus on the language of Mathematics in each lesson. The incidental teaching of mathematical skills and concepts through class competitions and surveys in the senior classes is highly praiseworthy. The problem-solving approach documented in the school plan should be implemented in all classrooms.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is good. Teachers use big books, class novels and historical topics as a stimulus for Drama. Pupils engage in group activities with enthusiasm and confidence. There is a need to ensure that the integrity of Drama as a curricular subject, rather than simply as a methodology, is maintained. The elements of Drama should be developed incrementally and a Drama contract should be established to support the cultivation of a safe environment.

- The quality of assessment is good. Teachers generally correct pupils' work and undertake routine tests, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Standardised tests in literacy and numeracy are administered annually to all pupils from first class to sixth class. The staff has begun the process of graphing the results of these assessments. The attainment of individual pupils should be tracked on an annual basis and teachers should develop assessment procedures for curricular areas other than literacy and Mathematics.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good in the majority of lessons observed. Lessons are structured and paced effectively with regular revision of topics. Considering the pupils' high standards, teachers should provide more challenging written activities with less dependence on lower-order textbook activities.

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

- The school avails of the services of a shared learning-support teacher and two shared resource teachers. The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil management in the support settings is very good. Teachers have established very positive relationships with their pupils, tasks are appropriately structured and pupils experience high levels of success.
- The recent appointment of a highly competent SEN coordinator within the school is ensuring a more unified approach to provision. The staff should clarify the role of the learning-support teacher to ensure learning needs in literacy and numeracy can be appropriately identified and supported.

*Published June 2013*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

We feel that this report is very fair and wish to acknowledge the courteous and professional manner in which the WSE was carried out. We are extremely pleased that the wonderful work and atmosphere in our school was both recognized and affirmed. We are proud of our children and staff.

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

- A contract for the D.P. has been drawn up, signed and approved by the BOM.
- Our treasurer will report at each BOM meeting.
- A review of the use of differentiated texts and spelling workbooks is ongoing.
- We will look towards accommodating our pupils' high standards of literacy skills by placing more emphasis on independent creative writing across the curriculum and by using a wide range of writing genres.