

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

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

**Scoil Mhuire**  
**Woodview Heights**  
**Lucan, County Dublin**  
**Uimhir rolla: 19817H**

**Date of inspection: 29 April 2015**



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

## 1. Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation was undertaken in Scoil Mhuire National School in April 2015. Scoil Mhuire National School is a co-educational, vertical primary school with an enrolment of 417 pupils. A major building and refurbishment project has recently been completed successfully by the school. During this whole-school evaluation provision for Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts was evaluated. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream-class settings and three support-teaching settings. 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 commended for its effective management of the school, including the recent school development project.
- The principal leads the school effectively, utilising very strong organisational and interpersonal skills.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' overall attainment in reading and Mathematics is commendable.
- Teachers give very good support to the holistic needs of the pupils.
- Very high-quality learning environments are provided by teachers.
- Pupils are eager learners and apply themselves diligently to learning tasks.
- The parents' association gives very good support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Whole-school curriculum plans should be revised in order to effectively guide all aspects of teaching and learning.
- Greater attention should be given to the development of pupils' higher order skills.
- Greater clarity is advised in all planning regarding expected learning outcomes for pupils' oral language skills in English and Irish.
- The correct deployment of additional teaching resources to learning-support and resource duties should be implemented as a matter of priority, and the school should continue to develop newly implemented models of in-class support.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is commended for the effective management of the school. It has overseen a major upgrade of the school's infrastructure recently. A range of effective

organisational policies comes to the board. The board should ensure that all policies are signed and dated by the chairperson upon ratification and reviewed on an agreed cyclical basis. While roll books are carefully maintained, the updating of the register (Clárleabhar) in relation to pupils' progression through the school, should be completed, in compliance with section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000).

- The principal provides effective leadership to the school community. He demonstrates very strong organisational skills, and has consolidated relationships within the school community. He is ably supported by the deputy principal and members of the in-school management team who carry out an appropriate range of administrative, pastoral and curricular duties. Individuals should prepare a short annual plan as a guide to achieving targets arising from identified school priorities.
- The management of resources in the school is of a high quality. Classrooms are very well resourced with effective use made of interactive whiteboards. Teachers are commended for providing very attractive learning environments for pupils. Special needs assistants (SNAs) discharge their duties admirably and help towards the full integration of pupils with special educational needs. The caretaker and secretary contribute greatly to the smooth running of the school. Currently, a learning support/resource teacher is deployed in a mainstream setting. The board is advised that, under the general allocation model, additional teaching resources provided cannot be used for mainstream class teaching as stated in Department Circular 02/2005.
- The parents' association supports the work of the school through a wide range of activities. Responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that almost all parents are happy with the school. The school's website is used very effectively to communicate with parents and pupils.
- During the evaluation, the behaviour of the pupils was commendable. Responding to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, the majority of pupils indicated that they get on well with other pupils, and are confident about getting help from a teacher or adult in the school. A significant minority of pupils, however, indicated concerns regarding the behaviour of other pupils in their class. The school is advised to sensitively explore this aspect of the questionnaire data in the context of its provision for Social, Personal and Health Education, and to take action as necessary in relation to any findings that may emerge.

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

- A range of organisational policies has been collaboratively devised. These policies effectively guide the smooth running of the school. A strategic action plan should now be devised to manage policy development and review.
- The school provides a range of whole-school curriculum plans. While this planning gives some guidance to teachers' practice, overall curriculum plans do not give sufficient direction to teachers on all aspects of provision. The school should review its curriculum plans to ensure that they contain clear guidance on whole-school approaches and to the incremental teaching and learning of key areas of the curriculum.

- The school has engaged very well with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. Improvement plans for Mathematics and literacy have been devised and implemented. The school should continue to ensure that all targets for improvement are specific, measurable and time-bound.
- Teachers plan consistently for their teaching and provide monthly progress records. The quality of planning varies. Overall, there is a need to ensure that pupils' learning outcomes, particularly in relation to language development in Irish and English, are clearly documented in teachers' short-term planning. Further clarity is advised with regard to supporting the range of learners, including the higher-achieving pupils.
- 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

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good overall. Lessons observed were underpinned by very positive, respectful and affirming teacher-pupil relationships. Pupils engaged diligently in their lessons. In many settings, effective whole-class teaching was marked by explicit explanations of concepts and judicious use of questioning. A good emphasis is placed on the recall of prior learning. It is recommended that teachers place a greater emphasis on the use of active methodologies to raise pupils' active and purposeful engagement, and to suitably extend their higher order skills.
- Cé go bhfuil roinnt dea-chleachtas le sonrú i ranganna áirithe, ar an iomlán tá gnéithe le forbairt maidir le múineadh agus teagasc na Gaeilge. Sa chuid is mó de na ceachtanna a breathnaíodh, baineadh úsáid éifeachtach as réimse mhaith de rannta agus dánta chun suim na ndaltaí a chothú. Sa chleachtas is éifeachtaí, múineadh foclóir agus struchtúir cainte áirithe agus tugadh seansanna do na daltaí teanga a chleachtadh i suímh difriúla. Moltar go leathnófaí an dea-chleachtas sin go chuire rang. Moltar úsáid níos feidhmiúla a bhaint as an léitheoireacht ionas go mbeadh na daltaí in ann dul i ngleic le cúrsaí foghraíochta agus fóneolaíochta na Gaeilge i gceart. Is léir go bhfuil réimse mhaith de scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil déanta ag na daltaí. B'fhiú amach anseo, scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach a fhorbairt go córasach ó rang go rang.
- *Overall, the teaching and learning in Irish shows scope for development although some good practice is evident. Most lessons observed utilised a good range of poems and rhymes to engage the pupils. Where teaching was most effective, specific vocabulary and language structures were taught, and pupils were given opportunities to consolidate newly learned language in different contexts. This good practice should be extended to all settings. It is advised that reading material be used more effectively to teach pupils correct phonics and pronunciation in Irish. A good range of pupils' functional writing is in evidence. Creative writing should be systematically developed as they progress from class to class.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is commendable with some very high quality practice noted. A wide range of reading material is available and pupils read with confidence. Pupils have opportunities to write across a range of genres. In particular classes, a high standard of penmanship is evident. Teachers model excellent oral language for the pupils. More opportunities should now be given to pupils to

incrementally develop their oral language skills. A whole-school approach to developing pupils' oral language should be designed and implemented.

- Overall, teaching and learning in Mathematics is good, with some very good practice observed. Lessons are well-resourced and well-structured. Concepts are taught and consolidated through good whole-class teaching. Effective group work is a feature of many lessons. Highly commendable practice was characterised by an emphasis on skills' development through a range of meaningful learning experiences. This very good practice should be extended to all settings. Lesson objectives should be adapted to appropriately challenge the range of learners.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts is commendable. Pupils' artwork, resulting from an exploration of a range of media across the strands of the curriculum, is attractively displayed in the school. Pupils have frequent opportunities to respond to their own work and to the work of well-chosen artists. Greater consideration should now be given to systematically teaching the elements, skills and particularly the language of the visual arts across the school.
- Standardised assessments are administered appropriately, indicating significant improvements in literacy and numeracy over the last few years. All teachers monitor pupils' written work. There is a variation in the effectiveness of teachers' feedback to pupils. Where practice is very good, teachers provide constructive feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. In a number of classrooms, criterion referenced check-lists are maintained. These practices should be extended to all settings.

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

- Good provision is in place for pupils with additional learning needs. In the settings observed, lessons were well prepared and were characterised by affirming teacher-pupil relationships. While effective individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) have been designed for pupils, teachers should ensure that all targets are based on a range of assessment data, and that the targets are measurable, achievable and time-bound. Caseloads should be reorganised to avoid a fragmented learning experience for pupils and to facilitate targeted programmes of intervention.
- The school is implementing models of in-class support. To optimise the benefits of such initiatives, and to assist in their ongoing planning, the school should avail of expertise offered by support services in this area. It is advised that stage one of the staged approach, as specified in the National Educational Psychological Service's *Continuum of Support Guidelines* (2007), be systematically implemented.
- The school is sensitive to instances of disadvantage and discreet supports are provided. A range of activities is in place to underpin the holistic development of pupils.

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# **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 would like to acknowledge the affirmation received in this Whole School Evaluation Report. The Board welcomes the recognition of the very fine work being carried out by the staff. This includes the inspectors' acknowledging the quality of teaching and learning, the very time high environments provided by the teachers and pupils' overall attainment in reading and maths. This was also endorsed by the extreme high levels of satisfaction indication in the parents' surveys.

## **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 Board of Management and staff of Scoil Mhuire welcome the main recommendations made in this report. Prior to the WSE advanced plans were already afoot in three of the recommendations made by the inspectors – revision of whole school curriculum plans, clearer planning for oral language skills and correct deployment of Learning Support teaching resources. This latter issue has already been addressed resulting in a reconstitution of four classes into three, thus ensuring that all LSRT teaching resources are correctly deployed. The fourth recommendation regarding the pupils' higher order skills will be incorporated in teachers' planning and assessment.

Throughout the report there are other points of advice and recommendations which the Board of Management and staff undertake to address over the coming year.