

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Gaelschool Uí Choimín
Cill Rois, Co. An Chláir
Roll number: 19999Q**

Date of inspection: 17 October 2012



**A N R O I N N | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

1. Introduction

Gaelschool Uí Choimín is a Catholic Gaelscoil under the patronage of An Foras Pátrunachta na Scoileanna Lán Ghaeilge Teoranta. This school is located in a rented building in the town of Kilrush in County Clare. At the time of the evaluation there were 71 pupils on the school roll, , most of whom have very good attendance records. There are three mainstream class teachers and a resource teacher on the permanent staff of the school. A teacher located in the adjoining primary school provides additional support for pupils with special needs.

This evaluation focussed on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Music. 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 provides effective, committed leadership to the school.
- The principal directs the work of the school ably and diligently.
- The teachers work diligently on behalf of the pupils and they maintain a friendly learning atmosphere in the school.
- The parents are extremely generous, loyal and supportive of the work of the school.
- The pupils are well-behaved and well-mannered. They display a lively interest in their work and co-operate willingly with the teachers.
- A high standard is achieved in the work generally and the quality of provision in Irish is particularly commendable.
- The results of the questionnaires administered during the assessment that the vast majority of parents and pupils are very positive about the overall educational provision.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that further development of self-evaluation and planning skills be undertaken, especially in regard to the gathering and analysis of data, the formation of action plans and implementation strategies.
- It is recommended that more of the support for pupils with special educational needs be organised on an in-class basis.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board supports the school in a committed and competent fashion. Various members of the board are highly commended for taking on specific duties which demand a significant amount of voluntary work of them. The chairperson visits the school very regularly. Regular meetings are organised, minutes are carefully taken and the accounts are independently verified annually. The income and expenditure account is on public display in the school. To help Irish and education through Irish a *naíonra* (playgroup) has been established recently in the school and Irish classes are provided for adults in the evening. The greatest challenge now facing the board is to find a permanent location and building for the school. The board is making a strenuous effort to achieve this objective.
- There is a capable and diligent principal in charge of the school. She gives priority to achieving a high standard of teaching and learning and to promoting the holistic development of the pupils. The deputy principal supports the principal in a professional manner in carrying out the leadership duties of the school, and the teachers with posts of responsibility have regular formal meetings, of which records are kept. To ensure that the posts' duties are closely aligned to recognised priorities in self-evaluation, it is recommended that they be reviewed in accordance with Circular 07/03, as often as possible.
- The school's resources are managed effectively. Though the learning settings are restricted as regards size, a great effort is made to keep these well appointed and stimulating. There is a broad supply of teaching and learning aids available and they are added to when funding is available. There is an interactive whiteboard in each room and the teachers are continually adding to their knowledge in the use of information and communications technology.
- The parents' participation is extremely important in the life of the school. The parents are heavily involved in religious occasions, sporting matters, the Green Flag project, concerts and other activities. Parents are informed about their own children's progress and about school matters in general. The parents feel that they have easy access to teachers if needed. The results of the questionnaires administered during the assessment indicate that the vast majority of parents are extremely positive about a wide range of school matters, including atmosphere, teaching and management. It is hoped that a website will be developed shortly for the school, a worthwhile development.
- The management of the pupils is of a high standard. The positive, respectful relationship between teachers and pupils was noted, as was the active interest and cooperation displayed by the pupils towards their work.

4. Quality of School Planning and Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning process and school self-evaluation is good. A wide range of organisational policies has been drafted by the staff and approved by the board of management. These policies offer clear guidance about the day-to-day management of the school. Regarding the curriculum, the relevant policies have been agreed and these documents are regularly reviewed.
- Commendable progress has been made in school self-evaluation. Standardised tests have been administered in Mathematics and English for years and a similar test in Irish has been administered for the first time this year. Information, both quantitative and qualitative, on the pupils' attainments is also gathered from other sources, including samples of work, checklists and teachers' self-observation. The information is studied

and analysed to make judgements on strengths and areas for improvement. It is recommended that further development of self-evaluation and planning skills be undertaken, especially in regard to the gathering and analysis of data, the formation of action plans and implementation strategies.

- The teachers provide appropriate short-term and long-term planning for teaching and it is evident that arrangements have been made to implement a coordinated approach to planning. In certain situations this work could be enhanced by placing additional emphasis on curriculum learning objectives rather than over-reliance on textbooks and workbooks.
- 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 is good overall and excellent in certain cases. The teachers' efforts to use a range of teaching methodologies to accommodate the various learning styles of the pupils and to keep them engaged with learning were noted. Collaborative learning is encouraged by giving the pupils the opportunity to work in pairs and groups. There is a significant emphasis on a communicative approach in learning, on technology-assisted learning and on inquiry-based learning. A high standard of penmanship and neatness was observed in the presentation of the pupils' written work.
- The quality of teaching, of learning and attainment of the pupils in Irish is very good. Irish is used as a living language of communication throughout the school and the pupils are encouraged to speak individually, in pairs and in groups to promote confidence and fluency. The pupils speak naturally on a wide range of matters. Verse, poems, songs and storytelling are central to the teaching of the language. The pupils read a certain amount of real books and this aspect of the work could be developed further. As the pupils progress through the school there is a significant development in their writing ability in various genres. It is recommended that more experiences are provided for them to get greater practice in free writing.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good overall. Pupils were observed to demonstrate commendable fluency and confidence in oral language activities involving story telling and mime in groups. Pupils at all levels are making good progress in reading. The systematic teaching of phonics and the effective use of the school and local libraries are among the key central strategies. Impressive samples of pupils' writing were noted throughout the school. Writing samples viewed featured cohesive structure, good use of writing conventions and a fluent, legible style of cursive handwriting. A comprehensive plan has been drafted to further strengthen aspects of literacy including extension of vocabulary and comprehension strategies and more precise oral language use.
- There is both good practice and very good practice to be observed in the quality of teaching, of learning and attainment of the pupils in Mathematics. The lessons are well-structured and the pupils are given useful opportunities to handle concrete materials in order to examine and to internalise concepts. A lively discussion is organised in each lesson and there is a particular emphasis placed on the careful teaching of the language of Mathematics. When asked, most of the pupils displayed a good ability in reasoning and in problem solving. It is recommended that these good practices be built upon and

that more attention be paid to strategies for mental Mathematics, to collaborative learning and to the basing of lessons on real life.

- The quality of provision for Music is very good overall. A good repertoire of verses and songs is taught in the two languages and they are sung sweetly and rhythmically, once a suitable starting note is given. Pupils are enabled to play familiar tunes on the tin whistle and on other instruments which illustrate and draw from the area's strong musical tradition. Percussion instruments are also used to develop an understanding of rhythm. In the practice observed pupils were given valuable opportunities to tackle composition in pairs and groups. In addition, the pupils have the opportunity to listen to and respond to different styles of music and there is appropriate development of the pupils' awareness of musical literacy.
- At the moment the teachers are particularly involved in broadening and adapting assessment strategies for the various areas of the curriculum. There are long-established arrangements for standardised testing in Mathematics and English and this year the Drumcondra Irish Test was used for the first time. There is now an emphasis on implementing continuous assessment and this is commended.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- A comprehensive policy has been agreed which ensures that the provision for pupils with special educational needs is organised effectively. Particular attention is paid in the school to strategies which reduce the frequency of learning difficulties. In this regard very good in-class work was observed in literacy and it is recommended that this aspect of practice be developed further. Teaching plans are carefully provided for individual pupils and groups. These plans focus specifically on the needs of the pupils. It is recommended that more specific care be taken with the recording of learning objectives on a more specific and measureable basis and that progress be assessed accordingly.
- There was skilful use of a range of teaching methods and helpful aids in the teaching observed and it was clear that the pupils were very much engaged with learning and benefitting from it. The particular empathy and positive interaction between teachers and pupils in these situations were highlighted.

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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 Gaelscoil Uí Choimín would like to express heartfelt thanks to the Department inspector for the courtesy shown to the school community and for the helpful, professional manner in which he carried out the Whole School Evaluation.

The Board is satisfied that recognition was given to the good atmosphere in the school, the very good work of the staff and to the high standard of the pupils.

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 school(now delivers more support for pupils with special needs on an in-class basis.

The school and school community understand the importance of the school self-evaluation process for the purpose of maintaining a high standard in the school.

The above is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management