

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Tullykyne National School
Moycullen, Co. Galway
Roll number: 08446K**

Date of inspection: 31 January 2013



1. Introduction

Tullykyne National School, Moycullen, County Galway is a co-educational primary school. The school is situated on the borders of the Gaeltacht. Almost every pupil comes from a household where English is the first language. This means that the school faces a considerable challenge in raising the standard of Irish and promoting the status of Irish among the school community. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway. There are three teachers in the mainstream classes and a learning-support teacher is based in the school. There are 75 pupils enrolled at present. Pupil attendance is good overall and attendance has improved over the past few years.

A whole school evaluation was conducted in the school in January 2013. The focus in this evaluation was on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Science. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 works conscientiously and diligently for the good of the school.
- The principal has made commendable progress since he took up office.
- Worthwhile work has been done on whole-school planning.
- There is a positive learning atmosphere in the school. The teachers use a variety of effective teaching methods.
- A good standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evident in a wide range of curriculum areas.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a specific development plan be implemented to promote Irish throughout the school.
- It is recommended that it be made clear in the enrolment policy that this is a Gaeltacht school, so that parents will be aware that the teachers are obliged to teach through the medium of Irish.
- It is recommended that the teaching and learning of Mathematics be reviewed on a whole-school basis.
- It is recommended that the services available for pupils with learning difficulties and those with special educational needs be reviewed.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management operates under the regulations of the Department of Education and Skills. The board meets at least twice per term. It plays a very active part in the life of the school. Board members are assigned specific tasks. The treasurer presents a financial statement at every board meeting. School accounts are submitted annually to an accountant, in compliance with the Education Act (1998). The main objective of the board is to develop a creative and active learning environment in the school. At present the board is working on the provision of a new health and safety statement.
- The board of management of this Gaeltacht school has a particular responsibility to promote Irish in the school and among the school community. The board appreciates the importance of this work. It is important that the board continue to support the principal and the teaching staff in their task of promoting Irish in the school.
- The principal was appointed in 2010. Since then, he has done very good work in developing school planning matters and in managing organisational and administrative matters. In collaboration with the chairperson of the board of management and with the chairperson of the parent's association, the principal attends carefully to advancing various aspects of the work of the school. The principal is committed to raising the pupils' standards in Irish and to giving priority to Irish in school affairs in general.
- The deputy principal and the special duties teacher give significant assistance to the principal in the day-to-day management of the school. The whole school staff works well together.
- There is a good supply of educational resources available in the school. Various aids are used to enhance the teaching and learning process, especially in Science. It is recommended that concrete material and educational charts be used more frequently as teaching aids, particularly in Mathematics. Effective use is made of the interactive white board in every class.
- There is an active parents' association in the school. The parents regularly help to organise various school activities. There is commendable co-operation between the teachers and the parents and there is regular communication between them. A parent-teacher meeting is organised annually. Parents receive a written report on their children's progress at the end of every school year. All the parents indicated, in their answers to the questionnaires distributed as part of this whole school evaluation, that they are satisfied with the school, that the teaching is good and that the school is well managed.
- The management of pupils in this school is good at every class level. The pupils work hard and they have a positive attitude to learning. According to the answers given in the pupils' questionnaires, all of the pupils consider this to be a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- In general, the quality of school planning is good. The principal, staff and board of management deserve great praise for the work they have done in recent years in drawing up a comprehensive school plan.

- It is now recommended that a development plan for Irish as the language of instruction be drawn up and implemented. In this plan, it would be necessary to pay attention to the status of Irish in every aspect of school life, for example: planning matters; the teaching of Irish and the teaching of all subjects through the medium of Irish; pupils' learning and achievements in Irish and the promotion of Irish among the school community.
- Regarding planning matters, there are Irish versions of the majority of the curriculum plans and policies available. It is recommended that the school continue this process. It is also recommended, however, that the policies be systematically reviewed, to make it clear in them that this is a Gaeltacht school. This would be particularly important in the enrolment policy, so that parents would be aware that the school is obliged to implement the curriculum through the medium of Irish.
- As part of the school self-evaluation process, the school is reflecting on the development of various educational matters. A three-year development plan for administrative and curricular matters has been set out by the school.
- The teachers provide suitable written plans for each curricular area. It is recommended, however, that more detail be included in the planning for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs.
- 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 general, the quality of teaching and learning is good, with a very good standard of learning observed in some cases. The majority of the pupils have a good knowledge of the work they have done in the various subjects. Many effective teaching methodologies are used throughout the school. It is recommended that a great effort be made to further enhance teaching through the medium of Irish, in all the curriculum areas apart from English. It is also recommended that the structure of some lessons be reviewed, to focus more effectively on the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on assessment throughout the school. All of the teachers systematically monitor the pupils' written work. Teachers carry out worthwhile analysis of the results of the standardised tests in Irish, English and Mathematics.
- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good throughout the school. A wide range of strategies is used to develop the pupils' oral and comprehension skills. Emphasis is placed on grammar in a positive way in the middle and senior classes. Most of the pupils can speak confidently about the topics being discussed. In a Gaeltacht school, however, an even higher standard of oral language should be expected. The standard of pupils' reading is good in each classroom and very good in some classes. As part of this work, commendable emphasis is placed on the explanation and discussion of new vocabulary. The standard of pupils' writing is good overall. Appropriate emphasis is placed on functional writing, but it would be worthwhile placing more emphasis on creative writing.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good at each class level with much very good work evident. Appropriate emphasis is placed on oral-language development. The

recitation, performance and writing of poetry are good. Almost all pupils attain very good standards in reading. Classroom libraries contain a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. Commendable written work, in a variety of genres, is evident in pupils' copybooks and on display in most classrooms.

- The overall standard of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. An appropriate emphasis is placed on oral Mathematics, through the organisation of number games and mental exercises. It is necessary, however, to always use Irish as the main medium of instruction in Mathematics lessons. Many of the pupils have a good understanding of mathematical concepts. It is recommended that consideration be given to the structure of the Mathematics lessons, in particular, to cater for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. In most classes, concrete materials are used to inculcate concepts. It is recommended that Mathematics in the environment be further developed in classrooms and throughout the school, for example with mathematical charts and stimulating, interesting displays to support the learning process.
- The quality of the work done in the area of Science is good in every class, with some of the work observed very good. Commendable variety is evident in the active work in which pupils engage at each class level. The school participates in various regional and national science projects and the pupils both enjoy and benefit from this. Students from NUIG (National University of Ireland, Galway) frequently visit the school, to organise science activities for the pupils. The commendable work done by the pupils in Science is on display inside and outside each classroom.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The quality of teaching and the relationships between pupils and teachers in the learning support and resource service is good. It is now recommended, however, that the services provided for students with special needs or learning difficulties be reviewed. As part of this review, it would be worthwhile placing further emphasis on early-intervention strategies and on providing extra support for Mathematics.

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