Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhín an Aoire
Meenaneary, Co. Donegal

Roll number: 18295V

Date of inspection: 9 February 2012
1. **Introduction**

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhín an Aoire is a small, co-educational Gaeltacht primary school with 20 pupils on rolls. The school is under the patronage of the Bishop of Raphoe. The school is a participant in a school support programme under the Scheme for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) and in the Language Assistants Scheme which is funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The roll books indicate that the school attendance of the pupils is satisfactory. 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 members of the board of management work effectively.
- The principal displays good leadership as regards the education of the pupils.
- The standard of the teaching and learning in Irish, English and Music is effective and very good in Mathematics.
- Very effective teaching and support is provided for the pupils with additional learning needs.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the communication skills of the pupils in Irish be developed further and that standardised assessment be employed in Irish.
- It is recommended that the participation of the learning support teachers in staff meetings be promoted.
- It is recommended that a plan for e-learning be developed in order to put in place the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The members of the board of management work effectively on behalf of the school community. The standard of communication between the chairperson and the staff is good. Regular meetings are organised and minutes are kept. An account is given of expenditure at every board meeting but it would be worthwhile to have the school accounts certified every year. The policies relating to the statutory requirements of the
1998 Education Act have been implemented by the board. Educational events are organised after school time to strengthen the speaking of Irish in the community. The board is commended highly on these efforts to strengthen the links between the school and home and to assist in maintaining Irish as the main language of the community, in line with Paragraph 9 of the Act.

- The principal fulfils his duties effectively. He fosters a co-operative atmosphere in the school. He himself and another member of the in-school management team focus good attention on the standard of education in the school. The duties relating to the posts of responsibilities are implemented well. The principal gives an annual report to the board on the progress of the pupils in all areas of the curriculum.

- There has been ample development of the school building over the last couple of years. It is recommended that the staff makes use of the new building as mainstream classrooms. There are interactive whiteboards in the two classrooms and good use is made of them. There is a fine range of computers in the computer room and their use is integrated by the teachers and the pupils in the teaching and learning across the curriculum. All the pupils declared in the questionnaires that they make use of computers/interactive boards in school everyday. There is a suitable range of library books in the school. There are plenty of very good exhibits that relate to the development of the school and a range of the pupils’ work on display in the corridors.

- One of the strongest characteristics of this school is the good, welcoming communication that has been cultivated with the school community. The parent representatives on the board made it known that the parents were welcome to express their views and to discuss educational matters. A formal meeting is convened with the parents to discuss their children’s progress once a year. All the parents agreed in the questionnaires that the school is managed well, that their children like the school and that they are happy with the school.

- The management of the pupils is very good and good care is taken of their needs. A pleasant atmosphere is fostered between the pupils and the teachers. The pupils succeeded in winning Corn Uladh in the 2009 and 2012 Cumann na mBunscoil quizzes. All the pupils in the questionnaires indicated that they get on well with the other pupils in the school and that they like school. Neither the Green School Committee nor the Students Council is functioning in the school. It is recommended that these aspects be considered when the relevant policies are reviewed.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school plan is laid out carefully. There are challenging targets laid down for every area in the DEIS plan and much has been achieved with very satisfactory results. Self-assessment is done in a structured manner and a very creditable record is kept of the pupils’ progress. It is recommended that the staff develops a plan for e-learning so that the integrated and structured use of information and communication technology will be implemented across the curriculum.

- The teachers provide continuous preparation for the teaching, included amongst which are teaching schemes, individual pupil programmes and monthly progress reports.

- 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 and learning is, in general, good. Skilful use is made of e-learning on the interactive whiteboard to discuss themes in the senior classes and good use is made of role-play in the junior classes to enrich language. The pupils know a satisfactory range of songs, rhymes and poems. However, it is observed that there is generally scope for development of communication skills and the connected use of language among the pupils. The majority of the pupils attain a very good standard in reading and most of them display understanding of the contents. The writing skills are fostered well by means of giving the pupils various types of exercises. It is recommended that the Séideán Sí programme and standardised assessment strategies be used in the future.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is effective. Oral communication skills are developed well. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the learning of phonics and rhymes to support early literacy skills. Beneficial use is made of class readers and class novels. Pupils display an avid interest in books and standards in reading are very good. Class library displays should be organised better. Pupils are enabled to express themselves effectively through a wide range of writing tasks. Writing is promoted across the curriculum to good effect. Pupils are given opportunities to use information and communications technologies (ICT) to develop their skills of drafting as part of the writing process in the senior classes. Overall, the standard of handwriting is good in both classrooms. Teachers use formative assessment effectively to monitor that all pupils make satisfactory progress in literacy.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. A structured programme with an emphasis on mental work and problem solving is organised as regular practice. A fine foundation for understanding is laid by the use of resources and display materials which are clear in both sections. The interest of the pupils is nurtured very effectively in both sections.

- The quality of teaching, learning and the attainment of the pupils in Music is good. A satisfactory integration is achieved between music and other subjects of the curriculum. Percussion instruments are used effectively in the various activities to perform elements of sequences in music. The pupils’ talents are celebrated regularly and modern music is developed effectively with electronic musical accompaniment.

- The quality of the teaching, the learning and the attainment of pupils in general is good. The pupils’ skills are developed progressively and commendable provision is made for individual differences and for pupils who have particular requirements. Use is made of suitable methodologies for teaching and learning. The two mainstream teachers alternate with one another for the teaching of phonics in English and teaching of equations in Mathematics. It is recommended that this good practice is extended so that group teaching for multi-classes be implemented between the support and the class teachers also. Assessment results show that the pupils are making very good progress in English and Mathematics.
6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The quality of the teaching methods and the interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The teachers who give the learning support service and who are based in other schools in the area work capably. It is recommended that the learning support and resource teachers be informed of staff meetings when special education is on the agenda, in order to formally discuss the progress of pupils.

- A book rental scheme is organised 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 Board of Management of Meeaneary National School welcomes this report and we wish to thank the inspector for the professional manner in which the WSE was conducted and for the level of support and understanding that was portrayed during the WSE. The Board of Management is very happy with the recognition given to the work of the Board, teaching staff and parental support 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

The Board of Management of Meenanear National School accept the recommendations of the inspectorate as outlined in the report. The recommendations are included in the school’s action plan for the future. The Seideán Sí programme and the standardised testing in Irish are being implemented in the school now. An e-learning plan has been developed and the support teachers participate in staff meetings. The recommendations will be a helpful guide in our review and planning in the future.