

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

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

**Scoil Chaoimhín**  
**Marlborough Street, Dublin 1**

**Roll number: 19831B**

**Date of inspection: 28 January 2016**



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S  
**THE INSPECTORATE**

## **Whole School Evaluation Report - Management, Leadership and Learning**

### **Introduction**

A Whole School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Chaoimhín in January 2016. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. 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.

Scoil Chaoimhín is a co-educational all-Irish school. It operates under the patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills and the school is a participant in the school support programme Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). Forty-six pupils are enrolled in the school and most have a good attendance record, even though the punctuality of some pupils is not always satisfactory. The school has the part-time services of a home-school-community liaison co-ordinator.

The **main findings** are as follows:

- It is evident that a happy learning atmosphere is fostered in the school, that the pupils show respect for each other and a desire to learn, and that support for pupils' wellbeing is of a high standard.
- The standard of teaching and learning observed in Mathematics during the evaluation was good and there was great merit in the integration through themes that was used systematically in teaching methodologies. However, the standard of learning being achieved by the majority of pupils in Irish and English is weak.
- The DEIS plan was not available during the evaluation. Only preliminary work has been undertaken on school self-evaluation. There is now a need to foster the culture and practice of deep reflection in order to facilitate the development of the school. All the stakeholders report that they are now ready to act on the development of the school.
- The school planning available during the evaluation was neither strategic nor collaborative in its approach.
- The basic principles of Irish-medium education are not being fully implemented in this school.
- Even though examples of good teaching were observed during the evaluation, with enjoyable, structured and integrated methods being used, this teaching did not have high enough expectations nor was it sufficiently focused on raising the learning outcomes of the pupils.
- The school is being efficiently administered by the newly appointed principal together with the deputy-principal. He understands the challenges involved in raising the standards of learning and increasing the number of pupils attending the school and is willing to face these challenges.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A strategic plan should be designed and implemented to deal with the low level of pupil achievement in Irish and English and with the decline in school enrolment.
- There is a need to design a DEIS plan and use the school self-evaluation process to identify priorities and measurable targets, and to complete an improvement programme.
- It is recommended that the teaching be adapted to all the pupils' needs by using a definite assessment system and an individual profile should be designed for the learning needs of each pupil. Ambitious targets should be set for them and appropriate monitoring should be carried out so that the pupils are enabled to achieve these targets.

- It is recommended that the culture and practices of Irish-medium Education be extended further. As a starting point, it is recommended that school stakeholders design a vision and a mission statement for the school and act in accordance with them.
- Curriculum plans should be reviewed in order to provide the teachers with appropriate teaching guidance and to ensure progression in learning.
- In order to foster a culture of improvement and to implement the recommended strategic plan, it is recommended that the school seek the support of external agencies through the Professional Development Service for Teachers.

## Findings

### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Even though the pupils participate in various learning activities and most of them agreed, in the various questionnaires distributed to the pupils, that they like learning, significant weaknesses exist in relation to aspects of pupil achievement.
- Overall, the quality of learning in Irish is weak. The pupils are not competent in speaking, reading or writing Irish. The pupils do not know enough poems, stories, rhymes or songs. Even though the pupils display a good understanding of the reading material, many of them have difficulty in reading high-frequency words and in using appropriate phonological skills. Their reading ability would be greatly enhanced if a differentiated reading and phonological programme were implemented from the beginning of each school year to develop discrete reading skills. The pupils' writing ability needs to be improved. It is recommended that a comprehensive phased plan for writing, emanating from the strategic plan, be implemented in the school.
- There is scope to improve the quality of learning in English. The pupils' oral skills are developed effectively, but this is not done in a planned incremental manner. Most pupils read with appropriate understanding, but with a lack of fluency and accuracy. To improve their reading ability, it is recommended that a differentiated teaching programme for reading be implemented on a whole-school basis. The pupils' standard of writing in English is weak and this aspect must be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- The quality of learning in the mathematics lessons observed during the evaluation was good. Most pupils demonstrated good competence in understanding concepts, in the use of mathematical language and in the calculation of number operations. The parents' support in *Maths for Fun* adds greatly to enjoyable learning, but more guidance is needed as to how this provision can be made available through the medium of Irish.
- Overall, there is a difference between the achievement of pupils in standardised tests and the satisfactory ability they show in basic competence examinations. It must be ensured, on a whole-school basis and on an individual pupil basis, that there is more consistency between the basic identified ability of individual pupils and their learning outcomes. With that in mind, there is a need to plan strategically in order to further adapt the teaching programme to the needs and abilities of the pupils.
- It must be ensured that pupils are learning through the medium of Irish in the external tuition given in Music.

### 2. Quality of Teaching

- Although beneficial work was observed in lessons during the evaluation, especially in the effective thematic work, there is scope for development in teaching. When best practice was observed, the learning objectives were clear, the lessons were well structured and the pupils were actively engaged in their own learning. Overall, however, the teaching was not focused on attaining a sufficiently high level of achievement.

- The teachers should have higher expectations in relation to the pupils' achievement in Irish. The deficiencies in the pupils' language must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Systematic enrichment must take place in the areas of vocabulary, form and usage of the language, with particular emphasis on eliciting continuous, rich speech from the pupils and on teaching the structure of the language. There is a need to design an incremental plan for each class level, with class-based and individually based learning outcomes, in the areas of vocabulary, language form, sounds and phonetics. It would be worth strengthening total immersion education in the junior classes for the purpose of language acquisition and enrichment. It is necessary to teach the language needed to learn all subjects in a systematic, incremental manner. Without this, the pupils will not be able to express themselves adequately through the medium of Irish.
- It is recommended that the *Séideán Sí* programme be followed in all classes. As part of the strategic plan recommended in this report, the basic vocabulary and form to be taught should be identified for each class. It is then recommended that ongoing language learning should be regularly assessed in order to plan the next teaching step. Irish reading and writing must be taught formally. To do this, the school will need more facilities and support.
- The teaching standard in the mathematics lessons observed was good, with a commendable emphasis placed on the development of skills, collaborative activities, and good use being made of concrete tools. It is recommended now that greater attention be given to developing the pupils' outcomes in standardised tests.
- Even though the teachers' lesson planning, based on the thematic work observed, was of a good standard, the planning is not comprehensive enough overall. Not enough details are given about teaching content, teaching aids and assessment methods. It is recommended that a whole-school approach be implemented in relation to planning, with teaching methods, learning objectives and differentiation and assessment strategies clearly specified. The monthly progress record must be reconstructed so that it becomes a good tool for whole-school planning and school self-evaluation.
- Certain assessment strategies have been implemented by the teachers. In order to gain the maximum benefit from these strategies, it is necessary to carry out an accurate analysis of learning outcomes. It is then recommended that the teaching be adapted to all the needs of the pupils, by designing an individual profile for each pupil. Ambitious targets should be set for them and actions taken so that the pupils can achieve these targets. It is recommended that an assessment policy be developed to guide the assessment work on a whole-school basis.
- There is scope for development in the support teaching given to pupils with special educational needs. A commendable emphasis is placed on the development of the pupils' confidence and social skills, but it should be ensured that this support is focusing appropriately on the pupils' ongoing learning and on learning outcomes. It is recommended that other strategies be implemented in the school that would raise standards in general, such as *Reading Recovery*, *First Steps* and educational supports for Irish. It is recommended that team teaching be established, where in-class support would be focused on the pupils' diverse learning needs. The school will need advice from external services, especially from the Professional Development Service for Teachers, to carry out all these activities; the school is advised to seek this support without delay.

### **3. Support for pupils' wellbeing**

- The support for pupils' wellbeing is of a good standard. There is a positive atmosphere in the school which fosters respect for all. There is a positive relationship between teachers and pupils. The pupils show a high level of self-confidence and pride in the school. It is important to ensure that all aspects of the yard are supervised at lunch time. The small number of pupils who need extra help for any reason, including socioeconomic reasons, are given appropriate and kindly support.
- 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*.

### **4. Leadership and Management**

- The board of management fulfils its duties enthusiastically and diligently for the good of the school. The newly appointed chairperson has a strong background in Irish-medium education. The board now faces big challenges, among them engaging with the design and implementation of a strategic plan, embracing the culture of Irish-medium education and further discussion with the relevant authorities in relation to safety issues on the thoroughfare in front of the school.
- The principal, who was appointed a very short time ago, is administering the school efficiently at present, with the help of the vice-principal. The principal has a very good understanding of Irish-medium education and the challenges facing the school. It is now worth developing leadership of teaching in order to guide the staff in implementing a continuing process of school development and a strategic plan to further the school's priorities. It would be beneficial now to refurbish the empty rooms in the school to adapt them as learning centres for cross-curricular work. An open collaborative atmosphere is fostered among the teachers as well as a kindly relationship with pupils.
- The school has the part-time services of a home-school-community liaison co-ordinator and this work is beneficial. It is recommended that some of the courses organised for parents be based in this school rather than in another school on the same site. It is reported that there is regular contact with parents in relation to their children's progress, but communication between school and home could be strengthened further. The parents' association gives support to the school: it would be beneficial for them now to register with the National Parents' Council and have their role clarified and strengthened.

#### **5. School Self-Evaluation**

- The school self-evaluation process has been started. However, a deeper analysis of the pupils' learning outcomes is required, especially in Irish and English. This would ensure that priorities for improvement are identified and that measurable improvement targets are set for each class level, as well as for each individual pupil, based on the priorities identified.

#### **Conclusion**

The school's capacity to develop further is good as the stakeholders are committed to the development of the school and the chairperson and principal understand the needs of this all-Irish school. However, the school will need decisive direction from the board as well as support from support services in order to achieve the recommendations of this evaluation report.

## **Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management is pleased to note the findings in the report that there is a happy learning atmosphere in the school, that the positive relationship between teachers and pupils fosters mutual respect among members of the school community and that the attention paid to pupils' well-being is of a good standard. The Board accepts the need to improve the standards of attainment of pupils, particularly in Gaeilge and English. The Board also accepts that the culture and practices of Gaeloideachas need to be extended throughout the school. The Board is confident that under the leadership of the newly-appointed principal, with the support and commitment of the teaching staff and the Board of Management, significant improvements can be made to the quality of educational provision for all pupils in the school. The Board is committed to seeking the support of the school support services to assist in meeting this challenge.

### **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The following steps have been taken to address the recommendations in the report:

- A mission statement has been developed by the interested parties
- An open evening was organised for parents of pupils and for other parents who showed an interest in the school. A number of new pupils have been enrolled for the coming school year as a result of this initiative.
- A whole school plan for the implementation of immersion education and the principles of Gaeloideachas has been developed
- The use of Gaeilge by pupils during playtimes is being actively fostered
- A whole school approach to developing pupils' literacy skills in Gaeilge and English is being developed. Team-teaching has been introduced across the school, with practices including "Cáirde ag léamh" (reading buddies) and shared-reading activities guided by teachers during an afternoon literacy hour.
- Discussions are taking place with a view to organising a whole school collaborative workshop to advance the development of a strategic plan for the implementation of the curriculum. Contact will be made shortly with the school support services for assistance in this regard.