

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna,
Coultry Road, Ballymun**

Dublin 9

Roll Number: 20015B

Date of inspection: 6 March 2014



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

1. Introduction

Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna was founded in 1994. The school operates under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta agus is an all-Irish mixed school. The school is part of the Department of Education and Skill's DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) scheme. 186 pupils were enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation. Overall, pupils' attendance at school is good. 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 provides very good support to the staff and the school community in order to foster a happy learning environment for the pupils.
- The principal provides effective and understanding leadership for the school and receives commendable support from the in-school management team across a broad range of aspects of school life.
- The staff is to be commended for the standard of teaching and the co-operative way members work together.
- Pupils with special educational needs are catered for appropriately. This support is provided in various settings and is directed at specific learning needs.
- A positive atmosphere is noticeable throughout the school and pupils are commended for the courtesy they show each other and the teachers.
- There is a very good relationship between school and home and parents play a central role in school life.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The effectiveness of short-term planning would be improved if more specific reference to differentiation and assessment were included.
- In order to build on the beneficial work done in devising a comprehensive programme to develop spoken, reading and writing skills in Irish it would be worth further emphasising pupils' ability to structure sentences. This could be done through an analysis of the most frequent mistakes they make.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management provides very good support to the staff and to the school community in order to foster a happy learning environment for the pupils. The composition of the board is structured appropriately and board meetings are held regularly. Board members have particular responsibilities and minutes of meetings are taken. The board plays a central role in the development of school policies.
- The principal provides the school with effective and understanding leadership and receives commendable support from the in-school management team across a broad range of aspects of school life. The management team members co-operate effectively with each other. Members fulfil their obligations conscientiously in a range of areas. Particular attention is paid to the development of curriculum policies. The in-school management team's duties are reviewed regularly in-house to ensure those duties are in keeping with the school's priorities.
- The school operates in prefab buildings and arrangements have been made with the Department to build a new building soon. Management of resources is properly undertaken. A range of appropriate facilities is provided to support teaching and learning and staff make beneficial use of them during lessons. Classrooms are well organised by teachers and good use is made of school corridors to exhibit and celebrate samples of the pupils' work.
- There is a good relationship between the school and parents. Parents' participation in the work of the school is encouraged. The parents' association participates in the life of the school and the self-evaluation work of the school has been discussed with them. The data from questionnaires given to parents during the evaluation indicate their satisfaction with the standard of education the school provides.
- There is commendable management of pupils' behaviour. A positive atmosphere prevails throughout the school and pupils are commended for the courtesy they show each other and the teachers. It is clear that behaviour is well managed and a good relationship between teachers and pupils is noticeable. The majority of pupils say they are doing well in reading and Mathematics and that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strategy on bullying.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and self-evaluation process is very good. The necessary policies are being implemented and are organised according to the various guidelines which have been issued. Policies are regularly reviewed to keep them in line with the school's needs. The school plan provides precise guidance to the staff to ensure continuity of the curriculum. There is a clear link between the school plan and the teachers' planning. Good work has been done regarding school self-evaluation and the school has made good use of a wide variety of evidence to write a self-evaluation report and plan.
- The teachers organise a learning programme for every aspect of the curriculum in their comprehensive long-term planning. A common system is in operation in the school to record progress and for short-term planning. The effectiveness of this planning would be improved if a more specific reference to differentiation and assessment was included.
- 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 in Irish is good. There is a commendable emphasis on real communication and use of language. There is frequent good use of work in pairs or group work throughout the school to provide pupils with the opportunity to use the language conversationally. Accuracy and wealth of terminology are fostered systematically. A good emphasis is placed on the learning of poetry throughout the school. The results of standardised tests show that pupils are doing well in reading. The staff has made a good start on devising the First Steps programme to help develop the pupils' spoken, reading and writing skills. This work is very worthwhile and if implemented throughout the school will help pupils attain to the best of their abilities. In order to build on the beneficial work already undertaken it would be worthwhile further emphasising pupils' ability to structure sentences. This could be done by an analysis of the most common mistakes pupils make and by teaching language exemplars in response to the mistakes. The staff gives due emphasis to promoting the process of writing. To add to this work it would be worthwhile continuing with an analysis of pupils' work and using the results to ensure the attainment of learning objectives which are focussed on defined learning outcomes. There is a commendable emphasis on the systematic teaching of penmanship throughout the school. The fruits of this are evident in the pupils' written work, especially in class displays and in their copybooks.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. A systematic programme is in place for the cultivation of pupils' oral language skills and this is effective in developing pupils' vocabulary and their sense of language structure. Lessons are pitched at an appropriately challenging level and pupils engage with enthusiasm. The development of pupils' reading skills is progressing well. A worthwhile emphasis is placed on reading aloud and this is effective in encouraging pupils to read with expression and to monitor how well they are reading. It is particularly commendable that pupils are able to identify and explain the skills they are acquiring. Further attention could usefully be paid to heightening pupils' awareness of how sight words might be categorised according as they are displayed, or included in personal dictionaries or spelling programmes. A school-wide programme has been put in place to encourage progression in the quality of pupils' writing. This progression is being achieved. Careful attention is paid to monitoring pupils' written work. To optimise the impact of this monitoring and thereby enhance the quality of pupils' writing attainment, it is recommended that the findings of this monitoring be used by teachers when devising short-term planning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Teachers in all classes place a commendable emphasis on teaching mental arithmetic. The teachers provide a wide range of learning activities for pupils during mathematic lessons. A link is made with the pupils' personal experience. Teachers explain concepts clearly and make good use of the interactive white board to encourage pupils to participate during lessons. Pupils are given the opportunity to investigate through the manipulation of concrete material. Pupils are taught efficient strategies to solve mathematical problems and a commendable emphasis is placed on the development of co-operative strategies. The pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the work done by them over the various strands of the curriculum. The teachers keep a record of the pupils' progress, and it is evident that most of the pupils are doing well in Mathematics. Various needs have been well catered for and teachers adjust the tasks to the range of abilities in the classes. Good use is made of a co-operative approach to give additional support to pupils with difficulties in Mathematics.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is very good. Good use is made of the school plan to organise a comprehensive programme for pupils in each class. This history programme effectively adds to the pupils' ability to undertake critical investigation of important events that have happened in their lives, in their families' lives and in the local community and events in the history of people in Ireland and in other parts of the world. By providing exciting learning activities for pupils in every class, their understanding of people's actions, religious beliefs and motivations in the past is progressively increased. Commendable emphasis is placed on giving pupils regular opportunities to work as historians. Good use is made of resources, timelines, photographs and documents in every class. Teachers integrate this subject effectively with other subjects. The link made with literature during history lessons is commendable.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement overall is praiseworthy in every learning situation, whether in mainstream classrooms or support locations. The teachers foster a positive atmosphere and ensure that there is a definite structure and continuity in lessons. Teachers are interested in ways of fostering best practice and carefully search for and develop educational interventions. Classrooms are well organised and worthwhile displays based on pupils' work and on how much they have learned are evident throughout the school. The teachers employ a good range of assessment tools and checklists in various subjects, including the results of regular class tests and standardised tests. Pupils engage eagerly in the learning activities which are organised for them and have regular opportunities to co-operate with each other in learning tasks and solving problems. Emphasis is placed on self-evaluation by the pupils of their own work so that they are part of the assessment process.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- There is effective provision for pupils who have special educational needs. The teaching support is based on the staged approach and is focussed on the pupils' needs. The teachers devise individual educational plans and learning programmes which include measurable learning goals. In all settings, capable teaching and a range of effective literacy and numeracy interventions were observed. Lessons are well organised and the approaches teachers use are assured. The teachers keep comprehensive records of the pupils' progress and make effective use of them to regularly assess the effectiveness of the teaching programmes.
- Commendable strategies and interventions are used to foster links between the school and parents. Two home, school and community liaison co-ordinators provide support to families. They organise a wide range of events to facilitate parents' participation in school life. Regular contact is made with families and parents have many opportunities to take part in events organised to promote learning in literacy and numeracy.

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