

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Gaelscoil Iarfhiltha
Tuam, Co. Galway
Roll number: 200611

Date of inspection: 5 March 2014



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
I N S P E C T O R A T E

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Gaelschool Iarfhiltha, Tuaim, Co. na Gaillimhe in March 2014. 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 representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. 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.

There are 191 pupils currently enrolled. Seven mainstream teachers and one learning support teacher are based in the school. One learning support teacher and one resource teacher work part-time in the school. An Foras Pátrúnachta is the school patron.

The school is located in temporary accommodation in the centre of Tuam town. Although the school is tidy inside and outside, the school accommodation is not satisfactory as a centre of learning in the long-term.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The board of management provides commendable support for the school.
- The principal has effective leadership skills.
- A welcoming Gaelic atmosphere is created in the school.
- There is a very good relationship between the parents association and the school.
- The teachers work diligently and conscientiously.
- Pupil achievement across a range of curricular areas is good.
- The management and behaviour of the pupils are very good.
- Worthwhile work has commenced on school self-evaluation.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on developing the pupils' oral language skills in a more formal manner across the curriculum.
- It is recommended that there be a more comprehensive analysis of the results of standardised tests on a whole-school basis.
- It is recommended that a graduated review be done of the school's administration policies, in particular the enrolment policy. It is also recommended that each policy be provided in both languages, Irish and English.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The learning achievements of pupils are good overall. Many pupils attain high standards across the curriculum.
- The achievements of pupils in speaking, listening, reading and writing in Irish are good. Most of the pupils in each class speak Irish fluently, competently and confidently. To help develop all of the pupils' oral skills further, however, it would be worthwhile fostering continuity in oral Irish more formally. As part of this, it is recommended that information on individual pupils' achievement and oral language ability be shared more effectively from class to class.
- The achievements of pupils in English are good and they receive an appropriate education in English literacy from infant classes onwards. Samples of the commendable written work done by pupils are on display in the classrooms. A good

variety in the pupils' written work is evident in most of the classes. The pupils' written work is presented clearly and neatly.

- The achievements of most pupils in Mathematics are good. Many of the pupils achieve a very high standard in numeracy. The pupils use concrete materials effectively to inculcate concepts. They are able to solve mathematical problems competently.
- The work done in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education, especially in History and Geography, is good throughout the school. Some of this work is very good.
- The pupils have reached a commendable standard in almost all classes in Music, both in singing and in the playing of instruments. The work done by pupils in almost all classes in the Visual Arts is very good.

2. Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching in the school is good, with some of the teaching being very good. All the teachers reflect on their work and they regularly try out new teaching methods.
- The class teachers make a very good effort to promote Irish in school affairs. They foster a positive attitude towards the language and they help the pupils to express themselves, when required. In some of the classes, however, it is recommended that pupils be encouraged to speak more.
- The teachers succeed in stimulating the pupils' interest in reading. They emphasise the teaching of letter sounds and pronunciation. Writing is taught effectively and the pupils are given regular opportunities to practise creative writing.
- The quality of teaching in English is good, with group teaching methods used effectively in some of the classes. All the teachers place appropriate emphasis on developing the pupils' reading and writing skills. Each teacher monitors the pupils' written work regularly.
- In Mathematics, effective teaching methods are used. The teachers use concrete material to enhance the teaching process. It is recommended, however, that more emphasis be placed on the formal teaching of mathematical terms and language; this has been identified by the school in its school self-evaluation report. It would be worthwhile further developing a maths-rich environment in each classroom.
- In some of the classes, the teachers explain new phrases formally and effectively in the various subjects, for example in History and Geography. It is recommended that this practice be extended throughout the school. It would be worthwhile placing more emphasis on teaching vocabulary in each of the curricular areas, to increase the pupils' understanding and language acquisition.
- Many of the teachers teach Music very competently. Commendable attention is given to Physical Education in most classes.
- The members of the learning support team demonstrate effective teaching skills. A good relationship between pupil and teacher is evident in these settings. There is scope for development in the service, however, especially in the coordination of the service. Some of the written planning for this service is very good. Planning matters for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs should be reviewed, to ensure that the same practice is being implemented in each setting.

3. Support for pupils' wellbeing

- The quality of care and support provided for pupils is good. The management of pupils in the school is very good. Pupils are courteous and well-behaved during the day. In the pupils' questionnaires, it is evident that the pupils like school. They have a positive attitude to their work.
- Parents' questionnaires indicate that they have great respect for the school. There is an active Parents' Association in the school and there is a very good relationship and effective communication between the association and the school.
- 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 works diligently on the school's behalf. The board is properly constituted and meets regularly. The school accounts are certified by an accountant annually. The board is trying to obtain a permanent building for the school and this has been the board's principal objective for several years.
- The quality of leadership and in-school management is good. The principal works very diligently and has commendable leadership skills. He always does his best to promote the school. His vision for the school is that every pupil should receive a broad education through Irish, in a setting that is stimulating and suitable for the task.
- Effective collaboration is evident between the principal and the deputy principal. It is recommended, however, that the deputy principal's duties in administrative, curricular and pastoral matters be set out more formally.
- The work of the special needs assistant, and that of the secretary, contribute to the smooth running of the school.
- There is a wide range of resources available in the school. There is a wide stock of books available. The interactive white board is used effectively to enhance the teaching and learning process.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has commenced worthwhile work in self-evaluation matters. The targets identified in the self-evaluation report and in the school improvement plan are appropriate. A review of mathematical matters was completed and the parents gave a useful input to the evidence collected. The school's aim is to enable the pupils to use mathematical language more effectively.
- The school regularly assesses the quality of learning in Irish, English and Mathematics, with standardised tests and other testing. These results are analysed well at class level. It is recommended that deeper analysis be made of standardised test results on a whole-school basis from now on.
- While the school has put together a school plan, it is recommended that each school policy be provided in Irish and in English. It is especially recommended that the enrolment policy be reviewed, in order to clarify the enrolment process.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to implement improvements in good.