

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**S.N. Bhaile Mhic Airt
Dungarvan, Co. Waterford**

Roll number: 05548D

Date of inspection: 4 March 2011



1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Bhaile Mhic Airt is a co-educational Gaeltacht school, under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are 71 pupils enrolled at present. The majority of the pupils have a very good attendance record.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The interest shown by members of the board of management and by the parents, along with the work they undertake on behalf of the school is acknowledged.
- The diligence and dedication of the teachers towards their work are commended, as are their great efforts.
- The pupils treat visitors in a polite and friendly manner and they show respect for one another in their work and in their play.
- The teaching and learning in the areas of Irish, English and Geography are good.
- The standard of teaching for pupils who have learning difficulties or have special educational needs is good on the whole.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management should appoint a mediator to resolve the difficulties that have arisen between members of the board, and it is recommended that the relationship between the board and the parents be developed.
- It would be advisable for the principal to seek advice and support to help her to develop her leadership skills.
- A proper school development plan should be laid out immediately for the school in consultation with all the partners, to work towards the implementation of school improvements.
- It is recommended that wider use be made of standardised assessment and that the results be analysed from year to year in order to strengthen the impact of the assessment results on the teaching and learning.
- There should be a greater use of novels in the middle and senior classes in both English and Irish, and it is recommended that there should be a greater emphasis on personal and creative writing in the two languages.
- It is recommended that a policy be developed for special needs provision, that the organisation of the support be reviewed and effectively co-ordinated, that regular open communication be developed between the support teachers and the class teachers and that extra resources be provided in the support rooms.

3. Quality of School Management

- The members of the board of management are interested in the development of the school. Notwithstanding this commitment, the board is not functioning effectively at present because of communication difficulties with the principal. A mediator should be recruited to discuss these problems and resolve the situation. Advice should be sought from the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA) and appropriate training courses requested which would help board-members to fulfil their role effectively and, in particular, to develop their role in matters of teaching and learning.
- A lack of leadership is evident in the school at present. It is vital that in-school leadership based on commitment to the school be developed and fostered among the school community. In that context, the school principal might seek advice and support from the board of management and from the Service for the Professional Development of Teachers. The vice-principal is dedicated to the development of the school but, although responsibilities have been assigned to her, these must be reviewed and adapted to the needs of the school, including an emphasis on curriculum leadership.
- Some teaching-aids have been provided in every classroom, and, for the most part, good use is made of them. It is now necessary to provide mathematical equipment and suitable books in Irish for every class.
- The parents give good support to the school and there is regular contact between the school and the parents. However, the relationship between the parents and the school management is not positive. It is recommended that the board of management develop this aspect of the work of the school as a matter of urgency.
- The pupils treat visitors in a polite and friendly manner and they show respect for one another in their work and in their play. It is now recommended that the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying code be reviewed in consultation with all the partners, because it was evident from the parents' questionnaires that they unclear regarding current school practice. In the Gaeltacht context, it is recommended that the staff make a still-greater effort to keep Irish as the principal medium of communication among the pupils in the school yard.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Not much work was done in the school for the past few years on developing a school plan, apart from a recent effort to begin work on it. The principal compiled a large part of the school plan for the whole school evaluation. The preparation of a proper school-development plan in consultation with all the partners is urgently needed, to work towards the implementation of school improvements.
- The teachers do worthwhile long-term and short-term planning which guides the learning, and they prepare monthly progress reports.
- The school authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was also provided that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new members); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed, in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- On the whole, the quality of teaching and learning is good. A decision was made last year to implement immersion education from infant classes onwards and not to introduce English until first class. The current plan should be reviewed to ensure that a full, broad curriculum is available to every pupil in English and in Irish while they are in the school and that guidance is provided for multi-stream classes in future.
- Every teacher undertakes some monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress in various subjects. It is now recommended that more extensive use is made of standardised assessments and that the results be analysed from year to year to strengthen the impact of the assessment results on the teaching and learning. It is also recommended that pupils' skills in Irish be assessed, as set out in the *Comharthaí Cumais na Gaeilge* assessment indicators.
- The majority of the teachers teach Irish diligently and the standard achieved by the pupils in oral Irish is commended. The good practice of some classes is commended, where specific vocabulary, phrases and structures are taught, and where suitable situations are regularly created to encourage authentic communication. The majority of the pupils have achieved a good standard of reading. Good use of varied texts was observed in some classes. It is recommended that extra attention be focused on the development of various reading skills at the start of lessons. It is also recommended that more use be made of novels in the middle and senior classes. The standard of written Irish is satisfactory. It is recommended that extra emphasis be placed on the step-by-step development of the writing skills, including free writing and process writing, right through the school.
- The teaching and learning in English is generally satisfactory. Good practice in oral language development was observed in some classrooms. The quality of teaching and learning in English reading is good overall. There is a need to provide extra suitable reading material in most classrooms and it is recommended that greater use is made of class novels in place of class readers. The pupils engage in a range of functional writing tasks and they write confidently in various genres. To build on this good practice, a structured whole-school approach to process writing should be adopted. The standard of handwriting and presentation of work in copybooks varies from class to class. This should be reviewed and a whole-school approach implemented.
- Most of the pupils are achieving a satisfactory standard in Mathematics. The majority show a good understanding of appropriate concepts. The language of mathematics is systematically taught. Good practice was observed in classes where maths games, active learning methods and concrete materials are used to reinforce mathematical concepts. The extension of these good practices is advised in order to consolidate the learning. It is also recommended that mental maths be developed throughout the school and that extra emphasis be placed on problem-solving and on mathematical trails.
- The standard of teaching and learning in Geography is good. The pupils' understanding of the different topics is developed with understanding. Maps and globes are available in some classes and these are used appropriately. To enrich the learning of Geography in some classes, greater use should be made of discovery learning methods, and a balance between learning facts and developing skills should be maintained during lessons. There should be a greater emphasis on the use of project methods throughout the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- In general, the standard of teaching for pupils who have learning difficulties or special educational needs is good and the support teachers make use of valuable teaching methods. It is now recommended that all available support be reviewed in order to co-ordinate the time allocation more effectively. It is also recommended that a whole-school policy be developed to provide guidance on implementing the staged approach outlined in the circular SP ED 02/05. Regular contact between the teachers should be organised and further emphasis placed on in-class support. It is recommended that a consistent approach be introduced for planning for the pupils and it is necessary to ensure that the learning targets are appropriate and achievable within a certain time-frame. The resources available to the support teachers should also be increased.

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Appendix

School response to the report Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

Tuigimid gnéithe éagsúla na tuairisce agus na dúshláin atá romhainn. Fáiltimid roimh na moltaí agus chímimid iad mar deis le forbairt agus dul chun cinn a dhéanamh i ngach gné de shaol na scoile.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Ó bhíomar ag plé leis an MSU tá idirghabhálaí ag cabhrú linn an Bord a rith agus tá ag éirí go hiontach linn dá réir. Tá comhairle faighte ag an bpríomhoide ó LDS agus tá cuid a dó déanta aici sa chúrsa “Misneach” chomh maith le cúrsa “Ciall Ceannaithe” i rith na laethanta saoire. Tuigeann an Bord Bainistíochta an bhaint atá ag an bplean forbartha scoile le comhoibriú a chothú idir an scoil agus an pobal Gaeltachta seo.

Tá cuntas níos fearr á choimeád ar thorthaí na measúnaithe caighdeánaithe agus chomh maith le sin tá feidhm níos éifeachtaí á baint as na torthaí. Cuirtear na measúnaithe seo ar fáil ag deire na scoil bliana de réir mar a moladh dúinn agus úsáidtear na torthaí chun barr feabhais a chur ar mhúineadh na huimhríochta agus na litríochta.

Tá plean forbartha scoile curtha i bhfeidhm maidir le húrscéalta Gaeilge a úsáid agus plean a chur le chéile maidir le scríobhnóireacht chruthaitheach sa dá theanga. Beidh sé i gceist freisin plean a leagaint síos don lámhscríobhnóireacht agus comhoibriú a chothú maidir leis an obair a chur i láthair. Tá cine déanta gurb í an Leas príomhoide a chuirfidh comheagar ar Riachtanaisí Speisialta agus tá tús áite á chur ar pholasaí um Riachtanaisí Speisialta sa phlean forbartha scoile leasaithe. Tá comhairle agus tacaíocht á lorg ón NEPS i láthair na huaire.

Tá an Bord Bainistíochta ag déanamh a ndícheall cumarsáid níos fearr a chothú leis na tuismitheoirí agus tuigeann said go rí-mhaith an tábhacht atá le Coiste na dtuismitheoirí agus tá said ag iarraidh an nasc idir an dá ghrúpa a láidriú. Tá cine déanta acu buaileadh le Coiste na dtuismitheoirí uair sa téarma ag tosnú 2011/2012.

Tá sé mar aidhm ag an mBord Bainistíochta go mbeidh ról ag gach páirtí i rith na scoile agus déanfaidh siad a seacht ndícheall féachaint chuige go bhforbrófar agus go gcuirfean an plean forbartha scoile i bhfeidhm.

Titeann sé ar an bhfoireann múinteoireachta athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an gcuraclam agus ar na polasaithe scoile. Déanfar cúram i mbliana d'athbhreithniú na bpolasaithe a bhaineann le Gaeilge agus Béarla i dtreo is go n-éireoidh leis an dTumoideachas. Tá sé i gceist chomh maith athbhreithniú cuimsitheach a dhéanamh ar mhúineadh an Bhéarla i rang a haon. Déanfar iarracht labhairt na Gaeilge a spreagadh i gclós na scoile.

Déanfar athbhreithniú ar an bpolasaí a bhaineann le matamaitic agus úsáidfear liosta cuimsitheach cluichí agus teicníochtaí i ngach rang i dtreo is go ndéanfar forbairt ar scileanna a bhaineann le áireamh béil. Beidh sé i gceist chomh maith maidir leis an bpolasaí céanna go n-úsáidfear láithreáin ghréasáin i ngach rang. Maidir le múineadh na Tíreolaíochta beidh béim i bhfad níos mó ar tionscnaimh a chuirfidh na páistí scoile ar taispeáint.