

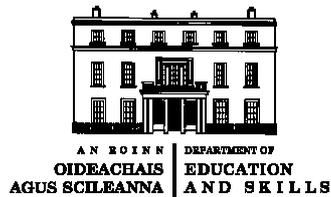
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Cillín Liath National School,  
Mastergeehy, Killarney, Co. Kerry  
Roll number: 19304B**

**Date of inspection: 21 September 2011**



**This is a translation of the original report which was written in Irish.**

### **1. Introduction**

Cillín Liath national school is a co-educational Gaeltacht school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. It is situated in the Uíbh Ráthach Gaeltacht, about 13 kilometres from the town of Caherciveen. There are sixty four pupils on the roll. The board of management of the school 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 board of management operates diligently for the benefit of the school and it ensures that appropriate resources are provided to support teaching and learning.
- An enthusiastic staff operates in conjunction with the principal, who has a clear vision for the development of the school.
- The pupils exhibit good behavioural habits and they undertake their learning enthusiastically.
- The school is developing close contact with parents and with the community in general.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management plays a more central part in drafting and reviewing policies and that school self-evaluation structures be implemented.
- It is recommended that a whole-school plan be provided for all curricular subjects and that a copy be made available to each teacher to support their individual planning.
- It is recommended that a plan for Irish be provided to guide the school's obligations under Article 15(2)(b) of the Education Act (1998) and to develop pupils' achievement levels.
- To further develop pupils' progress in English, it is recommended that a more structured emphasis be placed on an integrated language approach, that differentiated structured programmes be implemented on a whole-school basis, based on a deeper analysis of pupils' learning needs.

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The board of management strongly supports the work of the school. Regular meetings are held and clear minutes of these meetings are kept. Although financial accounts are maintained, a financial statement is not provided at every meeting and the accounts are not independently certified. It is recommended that a comprehensive financial report be submitted to the board at every meeting and that the accounts be certified in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act (1998). A new chairperson has been recently

appointed to the board. He meets the principal on a regular basis to discuss school matters. Some board members attended training organised by the patron. It was reported that board meetings are conducted through the medium of English.

- A newly-appointed principal took up office on the first day of the current school year. She demonstrates a clear vision for the development of the school and a good understanding of pupil achievement levels. The deputy principal closely supports her. Duties are laid out for post-holders and these duties are being reviewed at present to ensure that they fulfil the requirements of Circular 17/00 *Appointments to Posts of Responsibility*.
- The school building and environment are kept very neat and tidy. The school is regularly maintained, with the help of Department grants. A wide range of resources is provided to support teaching and learning in the school. A part-time secretary provides admirable support for the work of the school.
- A good relationship is evident between staff and pupils. The school has a code of behaviour and it is evident that it is appropriately implemented. Pupils indicated, through Department questionnaires, that they do not get an opportunity to work in groups. They feel safe at school and they consider their school a good one.
- There is no Parents' Association established in the school; it is recommended, therefore, that such an association be established and affiliated to the National Parents' Council (NPC). Parents indicated, through Department's questionnaires, that they are not consulted about school policies. A majority of the parents considered the teaching in the school to be good. It is recommended that structures be implemented to give parents a more central role in the life of the school. The steps being taken to develop a more open relationship with the parents and with the community are laudable.

#### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- A wide range of administrative policies is available, however, there isn't a plan available for every curricular subject. Although the board ratifies policies, it is evident that the members do not have an input into drafting them. It is recommended that strategies be developed for regular review of policies and to ensure that there is a plan for every curricular subject.
- Each teacher provides long-term and short-term planning and monthly reports. There is a range of practice in this work. It would be worthwhile implementing an agreed practice regarding the material to be included in these documents on a whole-school basis, to reinforce classroom practice. It is also recommended that a copy of the school plan be provided to each teacher, to ensure a greater link between teachers' planning and curricular objectives.
- There is no self-evaluation process in operation in the school. It is recommended that structures be developed to initiate this process and to ensure the participation of all parties.
- 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 provided to show 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 members (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

- Whole-class teaching and learning based on textbooks are the methodologies of choice. In some classes, an appropriate range of active methodologies was observed and it is recommended that these be extended on a whole-school basis. It would be advisable to teach subject specific language discretely to support the learning process.
- The standard of Irish in the school is fair. Although good use is made of verses, poetry and songs for children, the results of this are not apparent. It is recommended that the good practice observed in some classes, which involved three definite periods of communication, be implemented in every class. It is necessary, also, to provide more opportunities for the pupils to speak Irish, to increase their confidence in using the language. Reading is appropriately taught and some use is made of *Séideán Sí*. It would benefit pupils' learning if the aforementioned package was more widely used. Creative writing is undertaken from time to time. It is recommended, however, that more writing opportunities be provided in a structured way, to further develop pupils' skills. Pupils showed a lack of understanding, a deficiency of oral ability and a lack of writing ability in the language. It is recommended, therefore, that strategies be developed to considerably improve these aspects of the teaching and learning. Although this is a Gaeltacht school, it was reported that certain subjects are taught bilingually. The pupils normally speak to each other in English. It is recommended that a policy on Irish be drafted in consultation with all partners, to guide the board's responsibilities under Article 15(2)(b) of the Education Act (1998).
- Discrete oral language lessons in English are regularly taught. To further extend pupil achievement, it is recommended that a whole-school structured approach be implemented to ensure pupils' oral skills are developed in a more challenging manner. A commercial phonics programme is used effectively in some classes, however, to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' achievement a whole-school approach is recommended. Reading is developed appropriately using a variety of approaches and texts, including novels. Results of standardised tests indicate pupil achievement requires further development. To further enhance their achievement levels, a whole-school emphasis should be placed on an integrated language approach, on the implementation of differentiated programmes and strategies and on a deeper analysis of pupils' learning needs.
- It is clear from the evidence collected during the evaluation that an appropriate standard of learning has been achieved in mathematics by the majority of pupils. Good use is made of concrete materials to teach and reinforce concepts. It would now be worthwhile to forge a stronger link between concepts and the pupils' experience and environment. In general, the pupils show an appropriate understanding of what they are learning. It would enhance learning if a differentiated programme was implemented to serve the needs of the individual pupil.
- In the drama activities observed, good use was made of storytelling to foster pupils' ability to operate in a given role. A drama contract was successfully implemented. Safe environments are created in which pupils can develop and display their creative drama skills. Drama is creatively incorporated into other aspects of the curriculum also.
- Appropriate standardised tests in literacy and numeracy are used annually. To maximise pupils' levels of achievement, a deeper analysis of the results of these tests would be

worthwhile. This investigation would give a clearer whole-school view of the learning needs of individual pupils and would help to focus attention more widely on differentiation during teaching.

## **6. Quality of Supports for Pupils**

- Two teachers provide good extra support in literacy and numeracy. It is mainly on withdrawal basis from class that pupil support is provided. It is recommended that a greater balance be developed between the withdrawal system and a system of in-class support. Regular planning is carried out for teaching, as well as the development of individual educational plans for pupils. It would benefit the learning if more specific planning, based on particular learning objectives, was undertaken. It is recommended that parents be given a more central role in drafting the individual educational plans and that they be given a copy of the plan.
- A language assistant, funded by Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne provides appropriate support in Irish for pupils on two half-days each week. It is recommended that the work of the assistant be more closely linked to class work, to enhance the learning. It would benefit pupils if some of this work was undertaken in class.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**This is a translation of the school response which was submitted in Irish.**

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

We felt that it was quite early in the school year for a Whole School Evaluation.

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

**Gaeilge:**

We have written an Irish policy with the collaboration of all partners. Included in this is an action plan to improve Gaeilge in the classroom, playground, and the home.

- The Irish oral scheme Séideán Sí has been put in place strongly from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class.
- Appropriate books from the Séideán Sí scheme are used to further raise the high standard of léitheoireacht Ghaeilge.
- Poetry, Rannta, Traditional, modern and popular songs are being used to further enhance the enjoyment of the language. We have begun to teach traditional Irish dancing to add to the Irish cultural atmosphere.
- The appropriate language for O.S.I.E is taught discretionally before the lessons.

**English:**

We have undertaken the following steps to improve the standard of English and to develop their experience and knowledge of the world.

- Reading records-the children read aloud to an adult at home every night for 5-10 minutes.
- Reading buddies- the children read out loud with a partner from a different room to develop reading skills, model good reading and for enjoyment.
- Reading Pack-children get a new book every week, with comprehension activities at their own level.
- Book Report-children write a report on the book they have read that week.
- Oral Language-we are using following the scheme 'Speaking and Listening Skills' from Folens from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class
- Quiz- the children learn ten general knowledge questions every night to widen and cultivate their general knowledge.

- Free Writing- the children receive ten minutes free writing time on any topic in any genre they choose
- Creative Writing-children are given experience of and taught the different genres of writing. In the third term they will take 'Reading Bags' home once a week which contain various activities for creative writing.

**Mathematics:**

- Mental: book series "Mata Meabhrach" being used from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class and mental maths examined orally every day.
- Language: children are taught the relevant mathematical language.
- Problems: children work in pairs on problem solving
- Mathletics: the children are taking part on the internet site [www.mathletics.ie](http://www.mathletics.ie). We encourage and reward their participation with certificates and prizes every Friday at school.
- Games: the teachers implement maths games to reinforce maths concepts and for enjoyment.