

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

Gaelscoil Charraig na Siúire,
Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary
Roll Number: 20085W

Date of inspection: 19 November 2010



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

1. Introduction

Gaelscoil Charraig na Siúire is an all-Irish, co-educational school which functions under the patronage of Foras Patrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge. It has an enrolment of 177 pupils and levels of attendance are good. The school operates at the moment on a temporary site which is the property of the Carrick United Soccer Club. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to 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 of the school functions effectively.
- A very positive, collaborative atmosphere, which is open and welcoming, characterises the school.
- The parents generously support the school.
- An Irish language and cultural spirit pervades the school and a communicative context is created for the use of Irish by the pupils in all the school's activities.
- The school has a hard-working teaching staff.
- The standard of teaching and learning, and of pupil achievement, is good.
- While the school is housed in temporary premises, the site is safe and attractive, and the playing fields around the building are used by the school community.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the Board of Management should examine the policy on pupil retention, so as to ensure that the provisions of Circular 32/03 are not being breached.
- It is recommended that the pupils' progress in mastering the skills of Irish should be assessed, as outlined in the assessment system *Comharthaí Cumas na Gaeilge*.
- The appropriateness of beginning formal Irish reading with First Class should be reviewed, and a specific plan should be drawn up for the development of reading throughout the school in both Irish and English.
- A whole-school plan in mental mathematics and problem solving should be implemented in the school, and greater emphasis should be placed on differentiation in accordance with ability in every class.
- As a means of providing additional support for pupils with learning difficulties, a stronger emphasis needs to be placed on in-class work.

3. Quality of School Management

- The Board of Management functions effectively. The members fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously. The Chairman provides loyal support to the school. The Board participates in policy development. The Board should review the enrolment policy, so as to ensure that it fulfils its legal obligations to enrol pupils with special educational needs. It is recommended that the policy on pupil retention should be examined so as to ensure that the provisions of Circular 32/03 are not being breached.
- The Principal has returned this year from an eight-year period on secondment. During that time, the Deputy Principal acted as Principal and she is commended on the leadership which she gave to the school. The Deputy Principal and three teachers with special duties posts provide very strong support for the work of the school. The planned review of in-school management duties is to be commended. These duties should be based on the needs and priorities which come to light in the school on an on-going basis.
- While the school is in a temporary location, the site is attractive and the well-developed playing fields around the building are in use on a regular basis by the school community. The majority of teachers make every effort to create a stimulating learning environment in the classrooms. A good range of teaching aids has been made available and effective use is made of these.
- The Parents' Committee provides very good support for the school and positive relationships exist between parents, the school staff and the Board of Management. The Committee endeavours to maintain regular communication with the school community and, to this end, informative newsletters are issued regularly.
- The management of pupil behaviour receives careful attention. Good work habits are fostered in the classrooms and the majority of pupils collaborate enthusiastically.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Very good work has been done in the development of a school plan, aspects of which provide worthwhile guidance for the school community. It is recommended that the content of the curricular plans would now be reviewed. It should be ensured that they provide guidance for classroom practice and that whole-school decisions are recorded in such a way as to be accessible to all teachers. The school has made a beginning in relation to self-assessment by drawing up a constructive action plan. Further development is required in order to ensure that this plan influences school practice.
- The majority of teachers make very good preparation which takes account of learning objectives, productive differentiation and appropriate teaching methods. This practice should be developed on a whole-school basis and it must be ensured that the plans have a bearing on classroom practice.

Child protection policy and procedures

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 (including all new staff); 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

- The quality of learning and teaching is good. The teaching methods employed by the majority of teachers are active and varied and a broad curriculum is provided to the pupils. Teachers successfully utilise a range of resources in support of the work. It is now recommended that these practices should be shared and extended on a whole-school basis. The teaching and development of the spoken language, and correspondingly the language of instruction in the various subject areas, might also be given further attention. The progress of pupils is regularly and appropriately monitored and assessed. However, it is now recommended that the progress of pupils' skills in Irish be assessed using *Comharthaí Cumais na Gaeilge*.
- On the whole, a good standard is achieved in the teaching of Irish. An Irish language and cultural atmosphere pervades the school. The majority of pupils speak with confidence and with reasonable facility. Good practice is to be observed in those classes in which a range of suitable strategies is used to consolidate the oral skills of pupils. At certain levels, appropriate care is taken with fostering the skills of reading and the majority of pupils have attained a good standard. It is now recommended that a specific plan should be drawn up for the development of reading throughout the school. The appropriateness of beginning formal reading with First Class should be reviewed. Great care is taken with the development of writing skills during applied tasks. In certain classes, pupils are given opportunities of undertaking creative writing on a regular basis. To develop this area further, a stronger emphasis needs to be placed on creative writing and on the writing process.
- *Satisfactory standards are achieved by most pupils in English. While oral language is explored in all classes, particularly effective methodologies are employed in some classes to encourage sustained pupil participation. The structured phonics programme at infant level should be extended to all classes. Many pupils demonstrate appropriate reading standards and the pupils' questionnaires indicate that most pupils consider that they are doing well at reading. In some classes, effective use is made of differentiated reading programmes. The school is now advised to formulate a clear programme for the further development of reading skills and to consider the role of the class reader in this regard. Composition of poetry is addressed appropriately. Further guidance in the school plan on approaches to genres and the writing process would further enhance provision for writing.*
- In general, a very good standard is achieved in the teaching of Mathematics. It is apparent from the questionnaires that the majority of students consider that they are making good progress. Effective use is made of concrete materials and of mathematics in the environment in order to consolidate the lessons. The pupils are active during class. With a view to further advancing the good work, a whole-school plan for mental mathematics and problem solving should be implemented throughout the school. It is also recommended that greater attention should be paid to differentiation in some classes.
- A good standard is evident in the teaching and learning of History. In general, it is clear that there is continuation in the development of the strands from class to class. Suitable teaching aids are effectively used and the subject matter is presented in a highly stimulating manner in some classes. The skill of working as historians is used

productively in certain classes and it is now recommended that this good practice should be extended on a whole-school basis. History is successfully integrated with other aspects of the curriculum, particularly with Art and Drama.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The quality of learning and teaching is good in the case of pupils with learning difficulties or special educational needs,. A variety of teaching methods and a range of appropriate aids are used. A more extensive range of diagnostic tests would help to identify more clearly the particular needs of each pupil. As provided for in the school plan, a comprehensive, graded approach should now be implemented so as to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of every pupil. While some in-class work is done, the great bulk of support is provided by withdrawing the pupils from class in groups or as individuals. Outcomes would be enhanced if further emphasis were placed on in-class work. It is also necessary that a broader early-intervention programme would be implemented, designed to meet the needs of younger pupils.

Published April 2011

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Charraig na Siúire wishes to acknowledge receipt of this report. We wholeheartedly endorse the key strengths of the school.

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

A number of recommended actions have been commenced since the evaluation and others are in the planning process.