

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil,  
Glanmire, Co Cork.  
Uimhir rolla: 20239A**

**Date of inspection: 13 May 2011**



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

**1. Introduction**

Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil is an all-Irish, multi-denominational primary school operating under the patronage of *An Foras Pátrúnachta*. The school was established in 2006 with one teacher and seventeen pupils and was accommodated in the rugby club building in Rathcooney. At the time of the evaluation, 161 pupils were enrolled with a permanent staff of nine teachers. During this period of growth the board, in-school management and school staff worked diligently to secure permanent accommodation for the school. The outcome has been that, from September 2011, the school will operate in a permanent, specific building with sufficient space for future development. 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, in-school management and school staff have worked diligently to secure permanent premises for the school.
- The expertise of individual board members is very valuable to the work of the school.
- The school principal is very competent and works tirelessly on behalf of the school.
- Parents play a significant role in school activities.
- A high standard of Irish has been achieved.
- Results of standardised tests in English and Mathematics demonstrate that pupils have attained a high standard of performance in these subjects.
- The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the new board of management formulate policies in relation to teacher induction, organisation of meetings and facilitating parents to learn Irish.
- It is recommended that parental input into the whole-school planning process be ensured.
- It is recommended that the results of standardised testing should be shared with the board on an annual basis.
- It is recommended that the arrangement regarding use of mathematical language be included in the school plan.

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

- The board is very pleased that the school will have a permanent building. During the term of this board, the expertise of individual members of the board has been very valuable to the work and progress of the school. Board members have contributed to the development of a professional website and have provided very supportive professional advice for installing the system of interactive white boards in the new school. The chairperson of the board meets with the principal on a monthly basis and financial reports are provided at each board meeting. An external audit of accounts is carried out. All these good practices are commended. The school will continue to grow and in that context, it would be worthwhile for the new board to develop policies in relation to teacher induction, organisation of meetings, language policy and provision of support for parents to learn Irish.
- The school principal is very competent and works tirelessly on behalf of the school. As the first teacher in the school, she laid the foundations for the high standards of education which have been achieved. She has made a considerable contribution to policy development in the school and successfully negotiated the provision of a permanent building for the school. The principal receives very professional assistance from the deputy principal and the special duties teacher, both of whom are conscientious and effective in the performance of their duties. Their responsibilities include curricular and administrative duties. Particular focus is placed on pupil care. Formal meetings of the in-school management team are convened once a term and more often on an informal basis, as necessary. It is recommended that a report on the work of the management team be compiled annually and presented to the board.
- Parents assist significantly with school activities. Particular emphasis is placed on Music in the school and a school band has been formed this year. In addition, drama is important and earlier this year parents were very supportive in organising a special concert in the Everyman theatre in Cork city. Communication between parents and the school is very good and the website is beneficial in this regard. School news items as well as school policies are published on the website. It is also intended to enhance parental input in various aspects of the curriculum in the new school.

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

- Appropriate plans in relation to school administration have been developed by the staff and approved by the board. In the context of the new school building, it is recommended that parental input and their role in the whole-school planning process be ensured. Curricular plans are valuable in directing the work of teachers and the school staff has set out a comprehensive plan for learning support and special education. In order to progress the self-evaluation process in the school, it is recommended that the teachers focus on action planning in relation to curricular plans in particular.
- Teachers have developed very constructive long-term plans with lists of stories, rhymes, songs and teaching materials. A wide range of resources is included in the plans and an interesting variety of teaching methods are evident in both long and short-term plans. This practice is commended.
- 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

- Irish is taught in the school in a competent and enjoyable manner and pupils achieve high levels of attainment. In junior classes, good examples of direct method teaching were evident and included the use of repetition and group recitation. Acquired language is reinforced through active pair work. Reading development is progressing well and teachers use *Séidean Sí* imaginatively. Very good use is made of visual and concrete materials and information and communication technology (ICT) in order to present interesting lessons. The learning support teacher assists with teaching reading in senior classes and good use is made of novels in Irish. A very high level of continuous writing is achieved across the school. Singing is skilfully taught and pupils are familiar with a wide range of rhymes and poems in Irish.
- The results of standardised testing in English demonstrate high average levels of performance by pupils. The major challenge for the board and staff in the years ahead will be to maintain these levels of achievement as the school grows. In this regard, the results of standardised testing should be shared with the board on an annual basis. Reading development is established firmly in the junior classes with the emphasis on phonics and word games. Examples of very good English teaching were observed throughout the school, including very well organised station teaching in the junior classes. In the new school, this work could be extended further with parental input. Very good group reading practice is a feature of English teaching in the middle and senior classes and it was noted that one multi-class was working on three novels. Writing activities are linked imaginatively and beneficially to pupils' reading of the class novels. The pupils learn poetry and recite poems with commendable skill as an activity between lessons.
- Pupils are very successful in learning Mathematics and demonstrate good mastery of basic principles. Group and pair work are used productively. During the evaluation, pupils were active in lessons and concrete materials were used in very many classrooms. It is recommended that this good practice be implemented systematically in every class. Appropriate emphasis is placed on problem solving and learning content is discussed in a constructive manner. Content is adapted to pupil experience in order to facilitate and foster understanding. Pupil work, in the main, is recorded in copybooks in a methodical manner. It is recommended that a system of recording written work be established on a whole-school basis. It is recommended that the arrangements regarding the use of mathematical language be reflected in the school plan.
- The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is integrated effectively with the multi-faith programme taught on a daily basis. A wide ranging programme is provided for pupils in relation to: self-esteem, safety, citizenship and friendship. Issues concerning bullying are discussed frequently and useful strategies such as circle time, role play and stories are skilfully employed. Every pupil is given the opportunity to participate in the annual concert, an event which adds considerably to the school spirit.

## 6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised. Effective use is made of special programmes and of in-class, individual and group support. Earlier this year the new programme, *Fast Forward*, was implemented in the school. This is an

ICT based programme which assists pupils with reading difficulties and their progress is carefully monitored. Learning support and resource teachers assist with group reading practice in English and with early intervention work in infant and junior classes. Support is also provided in Mathematics and in Irish reading. Teaching is of a high standard, especially in the provision for individual pupils and groups in Mathematics. It is planned that a teacher will take a learning support course in the next school year. It is recommended that the board continues to invest in equipment and training for this work.

# **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**

The board of management of Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil would like to express their deep appreciation to the Department inspectors for the courtesy they showed to the school community and for the professional way in which they conducted the inspection. The board is particularly happy that the excellent work of the staff was acknowledged in this report and that the main strengths of the school were recognised.

- The atmosphere in the school and the central role each individual has in creating that atmosphere.
- The high standard of teaching and learning in the school
- The pride the pupils take in their work and learning

The board of management congratulates the whole staff and thanks the parents and the different committees for the work they do and for the support they provide to 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 policy is being put in place for teacher induction and for the conduct of meetings.

Classes to help parents to learn Irish are being arranged.

School management will ensure the inclusion of the voice of parents in the whole-school planning process of the school.

The results in standardised tests will be shared with the board annually.

The language of Mathematics will be included in the school plan.