Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

Gaelscoil Chionn tSáile
Cappagh, Kinsale
Co. Cork
Roll Number: 20265B

Date of inspection: 29 June 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Gaelscoil Chionn tSáile was undertaken in June 2010. Accordingly, this report presents the findings of that evaluation and makes recommendations for further improvements which could be brought about in the work of the school. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Drama, and on the provision made for pupils with special educational needs. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

This is a mixed school located in Kinsale. It is a Catholic school and the Bishop of Cork and Ross is its patron. The school was established in 2007 and it has since functioned on a very suitable site. It is comprised of new prefabricated rooms and it has been arranged that additional accommodation will be provided for the coming school year.

There were 20 pupils on roll on 30.9.2007 and the number has since grown to the present 65. It is anticipated that the enrolment will exceed 80 by 30.9.2010.

The following table provides general information on the school staff and on the pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils enrolled in the school</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream classes in the school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers on the school staff</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream class teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers working in support roles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs assistants</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision

The vision statement of the school indicates that its aim is to provide holistic education for its pupils through the medium of Irish in a safe, pleasant environment. The school succeeds in bringing this vision to a productive realisation.

1.2 Board of management

The board of management of this school operates effectively in accordance with the practices prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills. The board members willingly accept responsibility for their various duties and it is apparent that they succeed in providing highly effective support for the school. They are commended particularly on the interest they have shown in ratifying the policies of the school and on the emphasis they place on the provision of education of a high standard. The care taken with administering the finances of the school is also commended.
The collaboration which occurs between the Chairman and the Principal on a regular basis is most admirable. In addition, the level of communication cultivated by the school authorities with the parents’ committee and the whole school community is very worthwhile.

1.3 In-school management

The in-school management team is comprised of the Principal and Deputy Principal. The Principal succeeds in fostering a highly productive atmosphere and the manner in which she cultivates positive relationships with the whole staff is particularly praiseworthy. In addition, she reveals an accurate understanding of the standards attained by the pupils in all classes. The responsibilities associated with the special duties post have been clearly identified and are distributed fairly as between curricular, administrative and pastoral duties. This staff works most productively and it is apparent that great attention is paid to overall staff development.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community

The school succeeds in cultivating positive relationships with the whole school community. Every effort is made to keep parents informed on the work of the school by means of letters of information and of parent-teacher meetings. The parents’ committee is affiliated to the National Parents’ Council and its members clearly indicated their satisfaction with the work of the school at the beginning of the evaluation.

1.5 Management of pupils

It is evident that good relationships exist between the staff and the pupils. The school has a code of behaviour and it is clear that it is implemented effectively.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning

The quality of whole-school planning is most appropriate and each teacher has a copy of the plan. Consultation with all interested parties formed a central element in the planning process and, as a result, an extensive range of administrative and curricular policies has been drawn up. The progress made in respect of this is commended. It is intended to review the areas relating to the Environment, Science and Physical Education shortly.

Each teacher regularly makes available long-term and short-term planning, closely based on Curaclam na Bunscoile. The emphasis placed by the teachers on clear teaching objectives is worthy of special commendation, as is the attention paid to having width and balance in the curriculum. Teachers gainfully record the progress made in the monthly reports.

The admirably stimulating environment created by the teachers in all classrooms merits particular praise and the practice of putting the pupils’ work on display throughout the school is most worthwhile.

2.2 Child protection policy and procedures

In the course of the evaluation, confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Skills Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management had formally
adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Skills, September 2001). Confirmation was also provided that these child protection procedures had been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to each staff member (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.

3. **QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

### 3.1 Language

**An Ghaeilge**

Éiríonn leis na hoidí dearcadh an-dearfach a chothú i leith na Gaeilge agus is í atá mar gnáth-theanga chumarsáide sa scoil. Bunaítear na ceachtanna comhrá go cumasach ar an gclár Séideán Sí agus dá réir sin moltar go mór an toradh soiléir a bhíonn ar an obair. Leagtar béis le moladh ar structúr na gceachtanna agus diritear go hfeiceachtach ar fhorbairt na fíor-chumarsáide. Múintear scileanna cuí na léitheoireachta go torthúil aníos tríd an scoil agus is mór is fúi an úsáid a bhaintear as raon breá d’ábhair an obair seo. Múintear gnéithe éagsúla na scribhneoireachta chomh sciliúil céanna sa scoil agus sonraítear dul chun cinn soiléir ina leith. Baintear leas le moladh as an toradh a bhaintear as an nua-theicneolaíocht a gus caitear go córasach le teagasc na teanga trasna an churaclmaí.

Pléadh an tábhacht le bhaineann le hobair leanúnach a dhéanann eachtraí on the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. The clear outcomes of the work are highly praised accordingly. Commendable emphasis is placed on the structure of lessons and there is an effective focus on the development of real communication. Appropriate skills of reading are beneficially taught throughout the school and the use made in the course of this work of an impressive range of materials is very worthwhile. The various aspects of writing are equally well taught in the school and clear progress is noted in this regard. Commendable use is made of modern technology and the teaching of the language across the curriculum is systematically addressed.

*Irish*

The teachers succeed in fostering a very positive attitude towards Irish, which is the everyday language of communication in the school. Conversation lessons are competently based on the Séideán Sí programme and the clear outcomes of the work are highly praised accordingly. Commendable emphasis is placed on the structure of lessons and there is an effective focus on the development of real communication. Appropriate skills of reading are beneficially taught throughout the school and the use made in the course of this work of an impressive range of materials is very worthwhile. The various aspects of writing are equally well taught in the school and clear progress is noted in this regard. Commendable use is made of modern technology and the teaching of the language across the curriculum is systematically addressed.

The importance of on-going work on language enrichment in general was discussed.

**English**

English is taught very successfully throughout the school and it is apparent that well-structured whole-school planning positively influences class work. Creditable emphasis is placed on oral work and the pupils are frequently exposed to high quality language in relation to an attractive range of topics. Lessons are carefully structured and many pupils express their views with confidence and with commendable fluency. The relevant reading skills are also taught purposefully and reading for pleasure is an important feature of the overall literacy programme. The standard of writing is equally commendable throughout the school. Pupil portfolios are carefully maintained and utilised. They indicate significant progress for the most part.
3.2 Mathematics

There is a purposeful focus on the learning and teaching of Mathematics in the school. The structure and pace of lessons are praiseworthy and the teachers succeed in making commendable use of textbooks and of an admirable range of other aids. They frequently address internalisation in a measured way by making regular use of concrete materials. Pupils are fruitfully instructed in the use of mathematical language and a proper emphasis is placed on reasoning and problem solving as a result. Much of this work is skilfully based on the pupils’ own environment. In addition, the systematic use of evaluation and work differentiation was observed at various levels during the evaluation. The majority of pupils record their work very neatly.

3.3 Drama

Arts Education is addressed very thoroughly in the school and particular expertise in respect of this area exists among the staff. Accordingly, Drama is purposefully taught at all levels as a support for learning in other curricular areas. Particular praise is accorded to the commendable use made of specific situations and characters in order to explore appropriate feelings and to help the pupils to solve problems. The teachers ensure that a proper balance is maintained between the teaching of drama and the product of that teaching.

3.4 Assessment

The teachers implement a beneficial range of assessment strategies on a regular basis. These include observation and questioning by the teachers themselves, teacher-designed tests and portfolios of the pupils’ work. The MIST and Drumcondra standardised tests are also administered.

The effort expended on the preparation of the Teacher’s Monitoring Book is particularly commendable. In addition, particular praise is merited by the organisation of assessment folders, designed to measure the progress of each pupil and to draw up a programme based on the needs of the individual pupil.

4. Quality of support for pupils

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs

A learning support service was made available in the school for the first time in January 2010 and this provision now functions very effectively. Support for pupils is provided in English and Mathematics in a manner which involves all interested parties. The learning programmes are very appropriate and highly detailed records are kept on the progress of each student. Functional learning programmes have been drawn up and the class teachers, Principal and parents are given copies of these, as appropriate. Advice was given as regards directing further attention to what the pupils have mastered.

The use that could be made of diagnostic tests was discussed, with a view to gaining a better understanding of the needs of pupils, and already an arrangement has been made for the acquisition of appropriate tests.
4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups

The school extends a welcome to pupils from every background and has as its aim that each pupil would profit and benefit from life in school. There are no children from minority groups attending the school at present.

5. CONCLUSION

The following are the main strengths of the school as seen during the evaluation:

- The school staff is very professional.
- The board of management functions very productively under the capable direction of the Chairman.
- Very positive relationships with pupils are fostered.
- There is a clear emphasis on structured teaching and the learning of pupils.
- It is apparent that there is fruitful collaboration between all the school partners.

As a means of building on these strengths and in order to ensure further development, it is recommended that:

- There should be an on-going focus on language enrichment in Irish.
- Further attention should be paid to the use made of diagnostic tests as a support for the development of literacy.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were discussed very profitably.

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