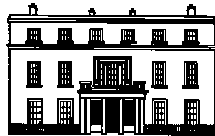


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Gaelscoil an Choillín
Culleenmore, Mullingar
County Westmeath
Roll number: 20238V

Date of inspection: 15 September 2015



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

1. Introduction

Gaelscoil an Choillín is an all-Irish co-educational primary school operating under the patronage of an Foras Patrúnachta. The school is situated in prefabricated classrooms on a temporary site outside the town of Mullingar, but the future of this site is in doubt in terms of planning permission. At the time of the evaluation there was a school enrolment of 97 pupils and their attendance record was good. There are four mainstream class teachers, a learning support teacher and a resource teacher on staff. The Whole School Evaluation (WSE) focussed on the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Irish, Mathematics and History. 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 improvement

The following are **key findings**:

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very productive and members are committed to the ethos and development of the school.
- The principal provides commendable leadership to the school community and she is strongly supported by the in-school management team.
- The quality of communication between the school and the parents is praiseworthy.
- A positive atmosphere is in evidence throughout the school and the management and behaviour of pupils is very good.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning, and pupil achievement is good throughout the school but differentiation needs to be improved in some classes.

These are the **main recommendations**:

- It is recommended that more opportunities for oral language be provided for pupils in order to develop their oral skills and their self-confidence in both English and Irish.
- It is recommended that a stronger link be created between assessment and differentiation for individual pupils and for multi-grade classes in the various classrooms.

3. Quality of school management

- The quality of work of the board of management is very effective. The board is properly constituted and meetings occur frequently. It is evident that members are committed to the ethos and the development of the school and some members have particular duties assigned to them. The board fulfils its legal obligations conscientiously and school policies are carefully developed.

- The quality of work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal provides commendable leadership to the school community and she has a strong vision for Irish and for the learning and wellbeing of pupils. All members of the in-school management team have specific administrative, curriculum and pastoral duties assigned to them based on the school's priorities. It would be worthwhile having an annual report prepared by the in-school management team for the board of management
- School resources are managed very effectively. A collaborative atmosphere is apparent amongst the staff. Although the school is situated in prefabricated rooms on a temporary site, there are lots of educational resources available in each room and a stimulating environment is created for the pupils. The secretary and ancillary staff provide great assistance to the work of the school.
- During the evaluation a positive atmosphere was apparent throughout the school and the management and behaviour of pupils was very good. In response to the Inspectorate's questionnaires almost all pupils indicated that they felt safe and that they liked the school.

4. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning process and of school self-evaluation is useful. Although a consultation process is used to develop policies, it would be worthwhile strengthening the involvement of parents in their review. Essential policies are included in the wide range of policies in place to direct school life. It is commendable that a strategic plan has been created for the regular review of policies.
- Curriculum policies provide valuable subject guidance to teachers. It would be helpful, however, if further details were provided on teaching methods, on the language of Mathematics and on an incremental programme for local History.
- In regard to classroom planning, teachers prepare appropriate lessons for their classes. In the best lessons, the learning objectives were in line with the curriculum objectives and there was reference to assessment and to differentiation. To develop this practice, it is recommended that a stronger link be created between assessment and differentiation for individual pupils and for the multi-grade classes in the various classrooms.
- School self-evaluation has begun well in the school and action plans have been designed for English and Mathematics. The school made good use of a range of evidence to identify objectives for improvement. In order to further develop this process, it is recommended that targets be written in a specific and measurable way, and that a strong link be evident between these and classroom planning and classwork.
- Confirmation was provided by the school authorities that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, without change or modification, and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning, and pupil achievement is good in general throughout the school. The teachers create a positive learning atmosphere in all classrooms and resources and appropriate methodologies are used to promote the interest and participation of pupils. Responses to questionnaires indicate that a large majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and learning.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in Irish is good. Total immersion for Irish language acquisition is being implemented effectively in infant classes to promote language acquisition. Irish is the language medium in the school and teachers provide good example to pupils by their own use of Irish. The communicative method is frequently used and most pupils' spoken Irish is of a commendable standard. It is recommended that additional opportunities for speaking and for differentiated tasks be provided for a minority of pupils in order to improve their self-confidence and accuracy.
- Reading is taught effectively and pupils have a wide range of reading material available to them. The majority of pupils achieve a high standard in reading but, in some classes, further attention could be focused on pronunciation. Writing is carefully managed and pupils write well in the various genres. A repertoire of poems and songs is recited throughout the school.
- Provision for English is fully appropriate, although some aspects can be improved. Formal instruction in English commences in senior infants. The use of whole school themes for English and Irish is praiseworthy. While the overall quality of oral English is good, some pupils require more speaking opportunities to develop their confidence. Suitable standards are attained in reading and pupils have access to a good range of reading materials, including class novels. It is recommended that reading tasks be differentiated carefully in junior classes to match pupils' learning needs. Pupils write well in a variety of genres and teachers help their pupils to plan, structure and present their ideas effectively.
- *Tá an soláthar don Bhéarla lánoiriúnach, cé go bhfuil gnéithe ann gur féidir feabhas a chur orthu. Tosaítear ar an teagasc foirmiúil leis na naíonáin shinsearacha. Tá úsáid na dtéamaí uile scoile don Bhéarla agus don Ghaeilge le moladh. Cé go b'bhfuil caighdeán an Bhéarla o bhéal go maith ar an iomlán, teastaíonn deiseanna labhartha ó dhaltaí áirithe chun a muintín a fhorbairt. Sroictear caighdeán fóna sa léitheoireacht agus tá raon maith d'ábhar léitheoireachta, úrscéalta san áireamh ar fáil do na daltaí. Moltar go ndéanfaí difreálú go cúramach ar thascanna léitheoireachta sna ranganna sóisireacha chun freastal ar riachtanais na ndaltaí. Scríobhann na daltaí go maith i raon seánraí agus cuidíonn na múinteoirí leo a smaointe a phleanáil, a eagrú agus a chur í láthair go héifeachtach.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in Mathematics is commendable. The subject is taught through Irish throughout the school, apart from fifth and sixth classes. A variety of resources and methods are used to develop pupils' skills and understanding. There is an appropriate emphasis placed in lessons on the language of Mathematics and on mental Mathematics. Pupils' responses, and their work, suggest they have an appropriate understanding of the various strands and it is clear that most pupils achieve a good standard in Mathematics. A lot of assessment information is gathered on pupil progress and it is recommended that this information be used to direct differentiation.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in History is very good. The use of computer resources, timelines and photographs to have pupils working as historians and to discuss evidence is commendable. Teachers manage to effectively integrate History with Drama, literacy and Mathematics to improve understanding. Most pupils display a good understanding of chronology, personal history and continuity and change over time. Although local studies are undertaken, it is recommended that an incremental programme be outlined in the school plan for this area to ensure continuity and skills' development.

- A wide range of assessment methods is used throughout the school. As well as standardised tests for literacy and numeracy, a range of diagnostic tools is used to discover the specific learning needs of individual pupils. A lot of data is kept on pupil progress across the curriculum. The effectiveness of practice would be enhanced if a greater link was established between assessment and differentiation in classroom planning.

6. Quality of support for pupils

- The quality of support provision in the school is of a very high standard. In the lessons observed the relationship between teachers and pupils was extremely positive and it was clear that the individual support plans were providing appropriate support for teaching. Those lessons were well structured and a range of suitable learning activities were used effectively. The teachers provide fortnightly schemes for their teaching when implementing individual support plans. It is recommended now that short-term weekly plans be available to provide more appropriate support for the incremental progress of pupils with special educational needs, as outlined in the *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000). Additionally, it is recommended that the incremental approach specified by the National Educational Psychological Service in the *Continuum of Support Guidelines* (2007) be implemented systematically.
- The quality of communication between the school and parents is commendable. The parents' association provides great support to the school through its participation in school activities. According to the responses to the questionnaire, almost all parents indicated that they are welcome in the school and that they are happy with the school.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Gaelscoil an Choillín welcomes this positive WSE report. We are very happy that the teachers' hard work and the high standard of work in the school have been recognised. The board is focused on implementing the inspectors' recommendations in the WSE report in partnership with the teaching staff and parents.