

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Mhuire
Tobar Muí Doire
TráLí
Co. Chiarraí
Uimhir rolla: 13530D

Date of inspection: 04 November 2015



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

1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational school located in the town of Tralee in County Kerry. At the time of the evaluation the school had 368 pupils on roll. School staffing consists of an administrative principal, fourteen mainstream-class teachers and nine teachers for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), two of whom are shared with other schools in the area. Scoil Mhuire also has a special class for pupils with specific speech and language difficulties. 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.

A whole-school evaluation was undertaken in the school in November 2015. During this evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in Irish, English, Maths and Science in seven mainstream classroom settings. Educational provision in six settings for pupils with special educational needs was also observed. This report is based on the lessons observed, interactions with pupils and a review of their work and meetings with the principal, deputy principal, the in-school management team and the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator (HSCL). Meetings were also convened with the board of management and with one of the parent representatives on the board. Completed pupil, parent and staff questionnaires and a selection of school documents also informed the evaluation.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main findings** of the work of the school:

- The school has an effective, professional and well informed board of management.
- There is a very supportive parent body in the school.
- The principal is a committed, reflective and highly effective school leader.
- The school has a dedicated, and very hard working deputy principal and in-school management team.
- While good to very good teaching and learning was observed in classrooms, scope to further develop differentiated teaching was noted in some lessons.
- High quality support is provided for pupils with special educational needs.
- While high overall levels of pupil attendance are recorded across the school, there is scope for improvement in the attendance levels of a minority of pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The decision to deploy a special educational needs teacher in a mainstream classroom setting should be reviewed to ensure compliance with circular 02/05.
- The school should further develop provision for differentiated teaching in classrooms.
- Moltar raon ábhar léitheoireachta a leathnú sa Ghaeilge. *It is advised that the range of reading material in use in Irish be extended.*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater attention should be placed on the implementation of whole-school attendance strategies. |
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3. Quality of School Management

- The school has a committed, dedicated and very supportive board of management. Board members have a broad range of experience and expertise and are very well informed on key aspects of school life. In addition to the significant work completed on policy review and development, the board is also commended for its work in maintaining and extending the school building and facilities. In support of the very good practice observed in the management of school finances, it is recommended that a report on income and expenditure be presented at each board meeting. The board should also prepare an annual report on the operation of the school.

The principal is a committed, reflective and highly effective leader who enjoys very positive levels of support amongst the members of the school community. She is ably assisted by a dedicated and very hardworking deputy principal and in-school-management team who attend to a broad range of duties in an effective and professional manner. It is advised that an opportunity be provided for post holders to present an account of their work to the board of management annually. In addition to the work of post holders, a highly commendable culture of leadership has been created throughout the school and a number of staff members have assumed leadership roles in range of curricular and organisational areas.

- The school has a very dedicated and effective teaching staff. Attractive and stimulating learning environments are provided for pupils. A broad range of resources is available in all classrooms and are utilised purposefully to enhance teaching and learning. The ongoing contribution of former staff members to the daily life of the school is also acknowledged. The decision to deploy an SEN teacher in a mainstream classroom setting should be reviewed to ensure compliance with circular 02/05. The school building and complex is very well maintained. The ancillary staff were observed to make a significant contribution to the daily functioning of the school.
- A broad range of structures are in place to promote positive levels of communication with the wider school community. The parents' association provides significant support to the school and HSCL records indicate good levels of parental attendance at a variety of courses. It is recommended that the parents' association consider affiliating the National Parents Council. Responses to questionnaires issued to parents reflect very high levels of satisfaction with the school.
- The management of pupils is highly commendable. An extensive range of initiatives is in place to promote social and emotional wellbeing in addition to academic attainment. A very positive and respectful atmosphere prevails in all classrooms and pupils present as enthusiastic and motivated learners. Responses to pupil questionnaires issued during the evaluation were very positive. While attendance levels in the school are generally good, it is recommended that greater attention be placed on the implementation of whole-school attendance strategies.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation is very good. A broad and comprehensive range of administrative and curriculum policies has been collaboratively developed. The curricular policies are closely linked to teachers'

classroom planning and this facilitates structured progression and development in curriculum implementation throughout the school. Monthly progress reports are completed consistently and maintained electronically in the school.

- The school is highly commended for its engagement in systematic data collection and analysis as part of the school self-evaluation and DEIS planning process. School improvement plans are currently being implemented for literacy and numeracy and Irish has been chosen as the focus area in the current school year.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without 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

- High quality teaching and learning was observed throughout the school. All teacher displayed effective classroom management skills and examples of carefully structured activities providing opportunities for collaborative and cooperative learning were noted. A variety of teaching methodologies were skilfully employed in classrooms. While information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively in the presentation of lessons, it is recommended that pupils be provided with a greater range of opportunities for hands-on engagement with ICT. Given the range of ability levels of pupils in classrooms there is scope to further develop provision for differentiated teaching throughout the school.
- Déantar iarracht macánta an Ghaeilge a chur chun i ngach léibhéil tríd an scoil agus ar an iomlán sroichtear caighdeán maith ó thaobh fhorbairt na scileanna labhartha, léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta de. Sna ranganna a breathnaíodh, múintear na ceachtanna go muiníneach trí Ghaeilge agus bhí béim ar leathnú foclóra agus ar struchtúir abairtí. B'inmhianaithe feidhm níos mó a bhaint as an scéalaíocht agus drámaíocht chun saibhreas teanga na ndaltaí a threisiú. Léann siad na téacsleabhair le tuiscint agus le cruinneas. Ní mór afách, an t-éispéireas léitheoireachta a leathnú a thuilleadh trí réimse níos leithne ábhar a chothú do na daltaí. Soláthraítear deiseanna saorscríbhneoireachta i gcuid de na ranganna. B'fhiú an cleachtas seo a leathnú go sistéamach tríd an scoil. *A genuine effort is made to promote Irish at every level throughout the school and, in general, a good standard is achieved in the development of pupils' speaking, reading and listening skills. The lessons observed were taught confidently through Irish and there was an emphasis on vocabulary extension and sentence formation. Greater emphasis on story and drama to would help to enrich and extend the pupils' communication skills. They read textbooks with accuracy and understanding. There is a need however to further develop the pupils' reading experience through provision of a broader range of materials at all class levels. Opportunities for independent and creative writing are provided in a number of classes and it is recommended that this practice be extended systematically throughout the school.*
- High levels of teaching and learning were observed in English. Pupils' oral language skills are developed through talk and discussion both in a cross-curricular context and during discrete language lessons. A good range of reading material is available throughout the school and pupils' comprehension skills are systematically developed. While novels and graded readers are generally used to good effect in classrooms, the use of novels could be further extended in some classrooms. The *Literacy Lift Off* programme provides for differentiated, targeted support in reading and individual pupil-progress is systematically tracked and monitored. The main features of key writing genres are taught throughout the

school and very well-presented samples of pupils' work were noted in copybooks and on school displays.

- Teaching and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a high quality. The classroom activities observed were underpinned by purposeful use of concrete manipulatives. Very good emphasis is placed on fostering mathematical language and on promoting number competence. A whole-school approach to developing pupils' problem solving skills is systematically implemented. The school environment promotes interest in and enthusiasm for Mathematics. Further use of the environment to consolidate pupils' understanding of concepts and extending the oral component of conceptual development would enhance practice in this area.
- High quality lessons were observed in Science. Effective whole-school and classroom planning facilitates structured implementation of the curriculum throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of a range of scientific concepts and commendable mastery of scientific skills. Very good use is made of the local environment to observe the processes of life and to explore a range of habitats. Pupils participate successfully in a variety of science initiatives and competitions. Awareness of the importance of care for the environment is fostered through involvement in energy conservation, recycling and composting activities.
- The overall quality of assessment in the school is very good. An extensive range of assessment approaches is used which include commercially produced tasks and tests, checklists, documented teacher observation and portfolios. Pre and post-intervention testing is used to track the impact of specific initiatives on pupil learning outcomes. Standardised tests in literacy and numeracy are administered to all classes annually and results are collated and systematically tracked and analysed at both classroom and whole-school level to inform approaches to supporting individual pupils and groups of pupils.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Very effective provision was observed in special education settings. All teachers plan systematically for their work and there is a collaborative approach to the formulation and implementation of individual education plans. A broad range of diagnostic tests is used very effectively to inform targeted teaching and pupils' progress is carefully tracked monitored and recorded. Support is provided in classrooms and through withdrawal for small group tuition.
- Collaborative planning and high quality teaching and learning were key features of the provision observed in the special class for children with specific speech and language difficulties.
- The positive contribution of the special education needs assistants to meeting the needs of pupils was noted during the evaluation.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes this very positive report which affirms the very high standard of management, teaching and learning and the holistic development of pupils in our school. The Board commends the dedication and commitment of teachers and support staff and the cooperation received from parents and the wider community.

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

The Board of Management has discussed and accepts the recommendations made in the report. The Board and staff will work together to incorporate these recommendations in future planning.