**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

# Whole School Evaluation
# REPORT

## Glenswilly National School
## Letterkenny, County Donegal
## Uimhir rolla: 19313C

**Date of inspection: 20 November 2009**

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

## WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

This report has been written following a whole-school evaluation Glenswilly National School. It presents the findings of an evaluation of the work of the school as a whole and makes recommendations for the further development of the work of the school. The inspectors held pre-evaluation meetings with the principal, the teachers, the board of management and parents representatives on the board of management. The evaluation was conducted over a number of days during which inspectors visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. They interacted with pupils and teachers, and examined pupils' work. They reviewed school planning documentation and teachers' written preparation, and met with various staff teams. Following the evaluation visit, the inspectors provided oral feedback on the outcomes of the evaluation to the staff and to the board of management. The board of management 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.

## 1. INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Glenswilly National School is a co-educational, primary school located near Letterkenny, County Donegal. The school caters for 243 pupils. Enrolment has increased since the last inspection in 1999 when there were 221 pupils and a teaching staff of eight. There is now a staff of thirteen teachers based in the school and one further teacher with part-time hours. Enrolment looks set to increase into the future. The pattern of school attendance is consistently very good. At the time of this evaluation one teacher was on career break and a qualified, temporary teacher had been employed by the board of management.

The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. While it has a Catholic ethos, pupils of all religions and of none are equally valued and respected. The school has a warm, family-like atmosphere. Both pupils and teachers present as enthusiastic and happy in their daily routines.

## 2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 Board of management

The board of management is properly constituted. It meets three times annually and minutes of proceedings are maintained appropriately. Board members' individual skills are used in an effective way in support of the school community. The chairperson remains in close contact with the principal. The board's finances are managed carefully and updated accounts are provided by the treasurer at each meeting. The board has recently extended the school's car-parking facilities thereby making the entrance significantly safer when parents are dropping off their children.

The board is committed to the development and review of whole-school policies and procedures and facilitates the dissemination of key policies to the school community. Ratification details should, however, be included in school policies. The board should encourage further parental involvement in school planning and review, thus ensuring that parents are aware of and can contribute to the school's organisational and curricular priorities.

While the board ensures that policies required by legislation are in place, there are weaknesses in the board's implementation of some Departmental requirements. For example, the current

distribution of the pupils to single class units, ranging in size from sixteen to thirty-four, means that class sizes exceed the recommended average of twenty-eight in five classrooms. The board should ensure that, as far as possible, the differential between the largest and the smallest classes is kept to a minimum in the next school year in accordance the requirements of Primary Circular 0002/2009. To ensure compliance with Primary Circular 11/95, *Time in School*, the board in collaboration with the in-school management team should ensure that the duration of scheduled daily breaks does not exceed the time permitted.

The board has been seeking an extension to the school since 1992. In 2006, as a means of publicising the slow progress of its building application, the board re-named the school as *"Seeking an extension since 1992 Glenswilly Primary School"*. During the evaluation, the board stated its disappointment with the Department's refusal to recognise the name change.

The board states that its main areas of concern currently include ongoing issues in respect of the building, enrolment pressures as the population in the area increases and limited capital with which to run the school and to rent temporary accommodation. The board has recently applied to the Department's building unit for emergency works funding to help with its most pressing health and safety concerns including the chimney, septic tank and roof. It is recommended that the board addresses other minor infrastructural deficits of the school on an incremental basis through the Department's summer work schemes as they become available; these are opportunities not availed of thus far.

The board members report that they are generally happy with the curriculum provided in the school. However, they state that the need to use the hall for storage impacts negatively on the physical education programme. They are also concerned that there is insufficient capacity to provide learning support for Mathematics within the school's current special education staffing allocation. Members identify the positive atmosphere, the teachers' openness and approachability, the happy pupils and the hard-working parents' association to be key strengths of the school.

**2.2 In-school management**

The in-school management team comprises the principal, the deputy principal and two special duties post-holders. The principal is diligent in the discharge of his administrative duties and his work in managing the day-to-day organisation of school is commendable. The principal has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attendance and places significant importance on leading a happy school. He aspires to do his best for every pupil in the school. In-school relationships are very positive and inter-personal communication is very good. An intercom or other immediate communication system would be a further help in this regard as the layout of the school is not conducive to easy person-to-person communication. The principal actively promotes the teachers' use of information and communications technologies (ICT). He ensures that teachers experience a range of teaching contexts and class levels. He is particularly supportive of newly qualified teachers. In the past, the school participated in the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI) and a formal mentoring system was successfully established. It is advised that links are re-established with the NPPTI.

Overall there is scope for greater curriculum leadership. In particular, on-going monitoring and review of programmes of instruction are needed to ensure appropriate progression in learning for pupils. Further whole-school discussion and decision-making is necessary to establish more effective planning strategies and these should aim to avoid overlap and omission in curriculum implementation. There is also scope for better engagement with the *cuiditheoirí* from the Primary

Professional Development Service (PPDS) in order to enhance in-school planning processes, target setting and professional development.

The deputy principal and the two post-holders fulfil all assigned duties effectively and work diligently to support the principal and to contribute to the overall management of the school. There are regular meetings of the in-school management team. Duties assigned to post-holders are reviewed regularly and generally span areas of organisational, pastoral and curricular responsibility. These duties include the maintenance of rolls and registers, collaboration at infant level and the coordination of special education. There is, however, scope for more engagement by post-holders with curriculum planning, co-ordination and review. The possibility of training for members of the in-school management team under the Leadership Development Support Programme should be investigated (www.lds21.ie).

**2.3 Management of resources**

The school has an administrative principal, nine mainstream class teachers, three learning-support/resource teachers for pupils with additional and special educational needs, two of whom are shared with other schools, and one part-time resource teacher. The morale among team members is high and there is a good sense of teamwork and collaboration. A significant range of talents, skills and creative abilities exists among the teaching staff. To capitalise on this, team-teaching and shared teaching practices should be developed to ensure that the expertise of all teachers is used and developed for the ultimate benefit of the pupils.

Three special needs assistants (SNAs) are deployed in support of pupils with special educational needs and they make a very valuable contribution to the pupils' inclusion, care and personal development. A full-time caretaker provides highly commendable service and is a valued member of staff. The school does not have a secretary and all routine administrative tasks are dealt with by the principal and post-holders. The services of a secretary, using the Department's ancillary staffing grant, should be secured to help deal with basic administrative tasks. This would allow the principal and post-holders more time for curriculum leadership.

There are seven mainstream classrooms and two prefabricated mainstream classrooms, one of which is unsatisfactory in terms of its size. The teachers have created visually stimulating environments in all classrooms which enable and encourage positive experiences for pupils. Some classrooms are exceptionally attractive in this regard. The classrooms are well resourced to support the pupils' learning. The classroom libraries are particularly noteworthy. There are four appropriately furnished and resourced prefabricated support classrooms. As there is no connecting corridor between the classrooms, the pupils and staff are exposed to the elements as they travel to any other point in the school. All pupils with additional and special educational needs must leave the school building to access the prefabricated support classrooms. Pupils in the prefabricated classrooms to the rear of the school have a significant distance to travel, often over very wet ground, to these support classrooms.

The ancillary accommodation is inadequate overall: toilet facilities for staff are unsatisfactory; there is no staff room; and the office space available to the principal is limited. The school has poor storage space. The general purpose room has been rendered less useful for Physical Education due to the storage of ICT resources, other teaching materials and lunch tables for staff. While the yards have been developed somewhat and a garden and vegetable plot are in place, there is still room for the further development of the exterior environment to enhance pupils' play and learning.

Overall, there is scope for development in respect of ICT acquisition and use. There is an interactive white board in the general purpose room. A data projector is available for classroom use and all classrooms have individual table-top computers. However, pupils' access to these computers varies from classroom to classroom. Additional laptop computers would be very useful in facilitating pupils' ICT use in classrooms, as resources permit.

### 2.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community

The parents' association works very effectively to secure additional funding for the school and recently it has invested beneficially in augmenting the classroom libraries. It should consider strategies to enhance its involvement in whole-school issues. Affiliation to the National Parents' Council (Primary) would be beneficial in this regard.

The parents' representatives on the board of management report that parents are happy with the standard of education provided by the school. However they report that the ongoing delay with the extension has been dispiriting. They state that parents are eager to see the amenities for Physical Education developed as inclement weather and reported problems regarding access to the local swimming pool restrict the programme for pupils. Parents, while not critical of this aspect of the school's work, would like to see learning support provided for Mathematics. They would also like to see improved use of ICT throughout the school.

The parents' representatives state that there are flexible arrangements in place to meet with teachers and that there are appropriate and fair procedures for dealing with parental concerns. Parents are informed of their children's standardised test results at the annual parent-teacher meetings. Consideration should now be given to including the results of standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics on the end-of-year report cards.

### 2.5 Management of pupils

The management of pupils is very good. The teachers have excellent rapport with their pupils and the pupils co-operate very well with the school's rules and code of behaviour. The pastoral needs of the pupils, including pupils with specific learning; emotional or social needs are managed very effectively. Positive behaviour management strategies are employed effectively in most classrooms. Pupils are keen to engage in discussion and display an interest in and enthusiasm for their work. Their participation in committees such as a school council or an environmental committee should be considered.

## 3. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

### 3.1 School planning process and implementation

The overall quality of organisational planning is satisfactory and ensures the smooth running of the school. To develop this planning further, it is advised that the templates and prompts available on the PPDS web site are used. *Cuiditheoir* support, as available, should be considered when reviewing key policies. Each teacher has a digital copy of administrative policies and curricular plans. This is very good practice which allows for easier monitoring and updating of policies. A school website would facilitate the dissemination of planning documents among the parent community.

Whole-school curricular planning has scope for development. While there are curricular statements for all subject areas, in the main these merely outline the aims and objectives of each subject area and do not provide sufficient detail as to the learning experiences that will be provided on a developmental basis in each curriculum area throughout the school. Revised curricular plans and policies should direct classroom practice more effectively and also indicate how implementation will be reviewed and evaluated. Details of the staged model of assessment should be added to the school's policy for special education as per Circular Letter 08/2006.

The board of management has not formally adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Science, September 2001). The board states without adequate in-service for all members of staff and proper infrastructure it cannot formally adopt the *Child Protection Guidelines*. The board confirms that the staff, as an interim measure, has agreed to adopt the guidelines as good practice The board has brought child protection procedures to the attention of management, school staff and parents and a copy of the procedures have been provided to all staff. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed. It is essential that the board proceeds immediately to ensure that the school is fully compliant with all aspects of Department's Primary Circular 0061/2006. It is strongly recommended that an application is made by the board to the PPDS seeking support in the area of child protection.

### 3.2 Classroom planning

All teachers provide long-term and short-term planning in support of their teaching. Overall the quality of individual long-term planning is satisfactory. The quality of short-term planning varies across the school; some teachers' short-term planning is comprehensive while others' lacks specificity. It is recommended that short-term planning for English, Irish and Mathematics is completed fortnightly as opposed to monthly. Greater detail about learning outcomes, in terms of the knowledge, skills and understanding that the pupils, including the higher achieving pupils, should be provided. All mainstream teachers provide monthly progress reports. In the future, these reports should be used by the in-school management team as a tool to inform curriculum implementation and review at whole-school level. Monthly progress reports should be maintained by the principal for one complete year, after the completion of the year to which they relate, as outlined in Rule 126 in the *Rules for National Schools.*

## 4. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

### 4.1 Overview of learning and teaching

The quality of the teaching observed during this evaluation was highly commendable in the majority of classrooms. All teachers are encouraging and affirming of their pupils and they work hard to ensure maximum participation of the pupils in the learning process. The teachers are hardworking and creative and they present lessons that are well constructed, motivating and that facilitate activity and discovery learning. Very sound pedagogic practices are employed in many classrooms with regard to the integration of subjects and the consolidation and reinforcement of the pupils' learning. Circle time is used to very good effect to encourage self-esteem and to enhance the pupils' speaking and listening skills. ICT is used very effectively to support teaching and learning in some classrooms. This could be further developed on a whole-school basis with additional emphasis placed on developing the pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum.

Overall, the quality of the pupils' learning is satisfactory. The pupils present as confident and motivated and they participate very well in learning activities. They enjoy opportunities for

collaborative learning and the effective group work observed during this evaluation in many classrooms indicates that they work and learn together very well. Pupils with special educational needs are suitably supported and encouraged in their learning. There is opportunity however, for even further differentiation for the higher achieving pupils in all classrooms. The *Guidelines for Exceptionally Able Pupils* (2007), published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, would be a useful reference for teachers in this regard.

### 4.2 Language

***Gaeilge***

Léirítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga agus tá dáiríreacht na n-oidí faoi chur chun cinn na Gaeilge le moladh. Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta sa Ghaeilge go sásúil san iomlán. Tá líofacht breá teanga le sonrú i measc na n-oidí. Úsáidtear cuid mhaith Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúl i rith an lae, i gcaidreamh sóisialta agus mar theanga bhainisteoireachta an ranga.

Sna bunranganna cuireann na hoidí na ceachtanna Gaeilge i láthair go bríomhar, taitneamhach. Eagraíonn siad gníomhaíochtaí éagsúla chun scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt agus chun a dtuiscint ar an teanga a éascú. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as obair bheirte, ról imirt, púipéid, rainn agus dánta chun foclóir na ndaltaí a leathnú agus chun a gcumas cumarsáide a fhorbairt. Moltar áfach, a thuilleadh aire a thabhairt don scéalaíocht agus d'úsáid na leabhair mhóra. Sna meán agus hardranganna úsáideann na hoidí modhanna spreagúla le linn na gceachtanna. Baineann siad dea-úsáid as ábhair chorpartha agus póstaeir mar thacaíocht don teagasc. Tá foclóir breá ar eolas ag cuid mhaith de na daltaí agus éiríonn leo abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Aithrisíonn na daltaí roinnt mhaith dánta, rainn agus amhráin, rud a fhorbraíonn dea-fhoghraíoch agus rithim na teanga.

Léann an chuid is mó de na daltaí sna meán agus hardranganna le líofacht oiriúnach ach is gá aird a dhíriú ar dhea-fhoghraíocht níos forleithne. B'fhiú fíor-leabhair bheaga, leabhair mhóra agus úrscéalta a úsáid níos mó chun taithí níos leithne léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil.

Déantar cleachtadh rialta ar an scríbhneoireacht tríd an scoil. Bunaítear na gníomhaíochtaí scríbhneoireachta cuid mhór ar na téacsleabhair ach i ranganna áirithe bíonn deiseanna ag na daltaí scéaltaí beaga a scríobh. San iomlán, áfach, tá caighdeán na saorscríbhneoireachta go híseal. Chun dul chun cinn sa scríbhneoireacht a threisiú tá gá deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí a thabhairt faoin saorscríbhneoireacht go rialta. Moltar béim bhreise a leagan ar scileanna an phróisis scríbhneoireachta chomh maith.

***Irish***

*A positive attitude is displayed towards the Irish language and the commitment of the teachers towards the development of Irish is praiseworthy. The standard of teaching in Irish is satisfactory overall. A good deal of Irish is used informally, socially and for classroom management throughout the day. In the junior classes, teachers present attractive, lively lessons. They organise various activities to develop listening skills and to foster comprehension of the language. The teachers make effective use of pair work, role play, rhymes and poetry to develop the pupils' vocabulary and conversational skills. It is recommended, however, that further attention is paid to story telling and the regular use of large format books. In the middle and senior classes, teachers use effective teaching approaches during lessons. They make good use of concrete materials and posters to support teaching. The majority of pupils have a good grasp of vocabulary and are able to compose simple sentences and ask and answer questions. The pupils recite a selection of rhymes, poems and songs, something that develops good pronunciation and language flow.*

*Pupils in the middle and senior classes read with suitable fluency however more attention should be paid to accurate pronunciation. The use of real books, large-format books and novels would be worthwhile in providing a broader scope of reading experiences.*

*Regular writing activities are undertaken across the school. In the main, writing activities are based on textbooks but in certain classes pupils have a chance to write simple narratives. Overall, however, the quality of free writing is poor. In order to strengthen progress in this area, more opportunities should be provided to enable pupils write regularly. More emphasis on the on the skills of process writing is also recommended.*

***English***

Overall provision for English is good. In most junior classes, pupils listen well and respond positively to story. In all classrooms, pupils are courteous and wait their turn to speak. All teachers give pupils regular opportunities to talk and discuss. In a small number of classrooms, it is recommended that more opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in peer conversation. Some teachers plan well for oral language development including discrete language and they implement a suitable classroom programme. It is recommended that discrete time be spent each week on oral language development in every classroom.

In the junior classes, teachers use flip charts and large-format books effectively to foster emergent reading. The pupils' word-attack skills are appropriate and their phonological awareness is successfully promoted through the combined use of *Jolly Phonics* and a very commendable in-house programme with accompanying workbook. Junior pupils have access to graded readers and suitable supplementary reading materials. Some teachers have organised reading folders for pupils and this practice might be extended to all junior classes. In the middle and senior classes, teachers read regularly to pupils. The pupils read from graded reading materials which in many classrooms are differentiated according to ability. This should be the norm in all classrooms throughout the school. A number of teachers are introducing pupils to class novels, a practice which should be extended and synchronised across the school. The pupils' attainment in standardised reading tests is good overall.

Teachers provide varied and worthwhile opportunities for pupils to write. The pupils' work is displayed on notice boards and in writing corners. Writing in copies and folders is well monitored and the majority of pupils achieve a satisfactory cursive writing style by the senior classes. The decision to introduce cursive writing in third class should be reviewed in light of the introduction of *Jolly Phonics* at infant level since this programme promotes earlier cursive writing. Pupils' spelling is tested regularly using dictation and list assessments and their free writing indicates that spelling is secure. Written tasks given to pupils during the evaluation indicate that their writing style, organisation and convention use is generally age appropriate. Further focus on oral language development, as aforementioned, including vocabulary enrichment work will enhance pupils' writing further.

### 4.3 Mathematics

Provision for Mathematics is satisfactory in most aspects. Whole-class teaching is the primary teaching methodology but it is complemented by effective differentiated group activity in a number of classrooms. It is recommended that differentiated group activity becomes the norm in every classroom. In-class support by the support teaching team is recommended in instances where large class size and disparate ability levels co-exist. In the junior section of the school, most classrooms are suitably number rich and early mathematical activities are effectively

promoted. There is good emphasis on language and concept development. In the middle and senior sections, classrooms are generally well resourced, teachers use suitable teaching aids and mathematical games to promote interest and understanding. The pupils' written work is carefully monitored and presented neatly. Regular and appropriate in-class testing is conducted.

During the evaluation, the majority of pupils achieved well in computation, place value, shape and tables tasks. However, a significant minority of pupils are unsure of their tables and this compounds their difficulties in other areas including problem solving. Standardised testing is carried out in Mathematics in second and fifth classes in accordance with Circular Letter 0138/2006. Results from these tests show considerable variation in attainment particularly at the senior end of the school. The teachers are concerned about the pupils' overall attainment and wish to bring about whole-school improvement in Mathematics. In doing so, they are advised to make more effective use of standardised assessments in tracking pupils' progress across the school. This will assist in monitoring improvement and in guiding targeted in-class support intervention. A more robust whole-school approach to teaching tables is recommended. Additionally, although some teachers are promoting problem solving to good effect, there needs to be a more consistent whole-school approach to problem solving. Reference should be made to *Effective literacy and numeracy practices in DEIS schools* (Inspectorate, 2009) which details how other schools achieved improved learning in Mathematics.

### 4.4 Social, Environmental and Scientific Education

***History***

The quality of teaching and learning in History observed during this evaluation was commendable. Where optimal practice was observed there was judicious use of text and pupils were encouraged to work as historians; they considered pictures, records and relevant artefacts from the past, they looked at the evidence of change and continuity in the local environment and attempted to use skills of the past. The integration with Irish in teaching the names for turf cutting equipment and the links with the class novel in English were particularly praiseworthy. The use of the Donegal County Archives Service to support the history programme has been very beneficial. Local history is well attended and displays of the pupils' project work and the use of timelines, which develop the pupils' understanding of chronology, are praiseworthy. The pupils display an enthusiasm for History and speak knowledgeably about themes studied.

***Geography***

Competent practice is evident in the teaching of Geography. Teachers in all classes deliver a satisfactory programme of geographical activities to allow pupils explore their own immediate environment as well as the world around them. To ensure a more developmental programme from class to class topics for in-depth local and national studies at each class level should be identified in the whole-school plan as well as European and international locations from third class upwards. Particularly creative use ICT in the teaching and learning in Geography was noted in one classroom. Other approaches, including field work, mapping, recycling, weather observation and recording and learning about other places are effectively employed throughout the school in the development of pupils' abilities to work as geographers. There is evidence of very effective integration with other subjects. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the topics previously undertaken. In some classrooms, well-devised project work is undertaken.

***Science***

The teaching and learning in Science are good overall. Features of effective practice include the development of the pupils' scientific skills, the use of collaborative group work, good talk and

discussion opportunities and the use of hands-on experimentation. As a means of ensuring optimum continuity throughout the school, it is advised that additional attention be given to the spiral progression of skills, concepts and language in whole-school planning. The investigation of habitats and living things, particularly trees and birds in the immediate school environment, the planning of bulbs and the promotion of environmental awareness and care are other elements of good practice in the science programme. The pupils display very good understanding of the processes of life in plants through their engagement in classroom-based and outdoor exploration. The school garden and vegetable plot support the pupils' learning in Science. Details of science trails, which help to exploit the richness of the immediate school environment, should be included in the school plan.

### 4.5 Arts Education

***Visual Arts***

The overall quality of provision for the Visual Arts is satisfactory. Teachers provide regular opportunities for the pupils to draw, paint, colour and print. There are some, but less frequent, opportunities to construct and to work with fabric, fibre and clay. The pupils' work is displayed carefully in classrooms and common areas and pupils enjoy the process of art making. In some classrooms, they study the work of artists including Van Gogh and Franz Marc. To enhance provision for the subject, it is recommended that teachers plan a scheme of work that details what activities will be covered across the six curricular strands, including looking and responding, for each class level. In this way, there will be more progression in each strand and less likelihood of omission. The teachers maintain samples of work in individual pupil folders. It is recommended that these collections be developed to become individual portfolios augmented as the pupils progress from class to class.

***Music***

Provision for Music is good overall. The teachers provide varied and consistent opportunities for pupils in literacy, song-singing, percussion work and musical appreciation. Appropriately, literacy progresses from stick notation in the junior classes to simple stave reading in the senior classes. The pupils sing a suitable repertoire of unison songs tunefully and dynamically. They are encouraged to sing from memory in most classrooms. Rounds and simple part singing are introduced in certain classrooms. Percussion work is successful: pupils regularly use homemade, tuned and untuned instruments and compose their own rhythms. Class-based choirs are prepared for liturgical celebrations. As there is discernible talent in Music across the school, it is suggested that a school choir be formed and participation in the National Children's Choir considered. Tin whistle and descant recorder are taught in several classrooms. To advance this provision, it is advised that a progressive instrumental programme is taught throughout the school and that teachers consider sharing their skills in this area.

***Drama***

Provision for Drama is good. Teachers use the general purpose room for lessons and have created a safe learning environment for drama. They utilise teacher-in-role successfully. Drama games are used purposefully and add considerably to the momentum and fun of learning. Teachers choose suitable lesson content and, through the medium of the fictional lens, it is examined successfully by the pupils. The pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on and to discuss the activities. During the lessons observed, the pupils participated enthusiastically and were very well behaved. Senior pupils were sincere in their approach but several of them were shy about surrendering to the fiction of the drama. However, through purposeful exposure to the subject, they are gradually becoming more confident. Drama approaches and methodologies are used to good effect in teaching other curriculum areas. In particular, their use as part of the wider SPHE

programme for pupils with additional and special learning needs is very effective. An annual Christmas concert provides opportunities for pupils to experience performance drama.

### 4.6 Physical Education

The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed in Physical Education during this evaluation was good. Activities from the *Games*, *Dance* and *Athletics* strands of the curriculum were evaluated. The lessons were well organised with appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities. The pupils engaged in a variety of well-structured activities that ensured skill development and maximum participation. The school has satisfactory small equipment resources and outdoor hard-surface facilities to promote Physical Education. The absence of an appropriately sized indoor facility presents a problem in the delivery of some strands of the curriculum during inclement weather. Very effective integration of the Irish language was noted during one lesson. This highly commendable practice should be developed across the school.

### 4.7 Social, Personal and Health Education

The overall provision in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is good. The principles of the SPHE curriculum are promoted through the very positive school and classroom climate. Discrete lessons are taught at all class levels. During the evaluation, very satisfactory lessons were presented on safety and protection in the home, conflict resolution, families, healthy eating and anti-bullying. The teachers use effective methodologies including circle time and the use of pictures, talk and discussion, poetry and puppetry. Throughout the school, teachers place significant emphasis upon health promotion and the pupils' emotional wellbeing. Programmes such as *Walk Tall and Stay Safe* are used to good effect.

### 4.8 Assessment

Assessment and reporting policy and procedures are comprehensive. Teachers are committed to the continuous assessment and monitoring of pupils' learning outcomes. Teacher observation is a common assessment tool with some teachers recording anecdotal notes. There is effective use of check-lists at the junior end of the school. Copybooks are very well monitored and some teachers use motivational comments and rewards to good effect. Test copybooks are used successfully for weekly spelling and other tests. Teachers maintain samples of the pupils' work across the curriculum with some teachers beginning to develop pupil portfolios. Teachers should continue to explore assessment for learning strategies and develop the pupils' skills in the areas of self-assessment and peer assessment.

At a whole-school level standardised tests in English reading are administered each year from first class. Standardised testing in Mathematics is undertaken in second and fifth class. In the context of this school this practice should be reviewed as part of a targeted approach to raising attainment in Mathematics. Attainments in literacy and numeracy on standardised tests should be more closely tracked so as to monitor progression in learning throughout the school. The data generated from standardised testing are used to identify pupils in need of learning support. Comprehensive screening strategies are used to help assess the younger pupils' learning and appropriate action is taken to address any identified weakness.

## 5. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

### 5.1 Pupils with special educational needs

The quality of support for pupils is commendable in most aspects. The school creates a highly supportive environment for its pupils. Mainstream teachers are sensitive in their provision for

pupils with additional and special educational needs. Some teachers differentiate their literacy and numeracy programmes to good effect. In some classrooms, however, further differentiation in respect of reading and numeracy is necessary and is aforementioned in this report.

Four teachers provide dedicated support in the area of learning-support and resource teaching; one based in the school full-time, two based in the school but shared with other schools and one part-time. Provision is generally in literacy but numeracy is supported if stipulated as being necessary in a psychological assessment. Pupils are taken singly, in pairs or to a lesser extent in groups of three. They are generally withdrawn for support. The most appropriate group size for withdrawal support and further opportunities for in-class support are two issues that the team will need to keep under constant review. Members of the support team also take small groups for circle-time activities in the general purpose room. This is worthwhile practice. The support team is conscientious and hardworking. Members of the team give freely of their time and have attended seminars and completed on-line courses in relevant areas. The teachers have very good rapport with pupils and they use resources, including ICT, very effectively. Careful records are maintained and it is evident that pupils are making progress commensurate with their abilities. Lessons observed were effective and purposeful and overall the four pre-fabricated support rooms were well presented.

The special education co-ordinator provides commendable leadership to the support team. There is good consistency in teaching approaches, assessment and recording across the team. There is effective communication with mainstream teachers, two of whom are qualified learning-support teachers now returned to mainstream teaching. The pupils' progress is discussed regularly with parents and learning targets are shared with them. Each support teacher maintains a home-links copy. In developing the area of special education in the school, there are a number of areas that should be attended: the benefits of some members of the team obtaining a post-graduate diploma in special educational needs should be considered; the support team should avail of support from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the special educational needs organiser (SENO) in the development of individual learning programmes; opportunities should be created to provide purposeful in-class support for Mathematics.

### 5.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups

Teachers are sensitive to any isolated instance of disadvantage which manifests.

## 6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- The skilful, conscientious teaching staff works diligently to provide an appropriate programme of learning for all the pupils in the school.
- The principal has fostered a highly commendable sense of team among staff members. Morale is high and there is praiseworthy collaboration among colleagues.
- The openness of the teachers to new ideas and their earnestness in wishing to continually improve teaching and learning standards are noteworthy.
- The school is a very happy learning environment. The pupils are well behaved and courteous and are motivated and enthusiastic in their learning.
- There is a high level of curriculum integration and a very good standard of project work in many classes across the school.

- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and included in all school activities. The use of the circle time methodology to support pupils' emotional or social needs is effective.
- The contribution of the parents' association to the success of the school is commendable.

As a means of building on these strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

- It is essential that the board proceeds immediately to ensure that it is fully compliant with Department's Primary Circular 0061/2006 and the requirements therein regarding the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools.*
- It is recommended that whole-school curriculum planning and consistent implementation are prioritised.
- It is recommended that the current practice of establishing single class units is reviewed to ensure more satisfactory class sizes for the school year 2010/11 in line with Circular 0002/2009.
- It is recommended that a well-planned whole-school approach be adopted towards raising pupils' performance in Mathematics.
- B'fhíu an scríbhneoireacht sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt trí deiseanna breise a thabhairt do na daltaí téacsanna éagsúla scríbhneoireachta a dhéanamh. *The pupils' writing experience in Irish should be developed through further engagement with various genres of writing.*

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

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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 thanks all board members who served in a voluntary capacity since its inaugural meeting in 1975. Pupils, past and present, have benefited greatly from their selfless, unpaid service, their common sense and leadership, their clarity of vision and sense of civic responsibility.

The Board is happy that the WSE presents a positive endorsement of the tremendous work being done, in difficult circumstances.

It is noted, however, that, unlike our previous reports, the key recommendations do not mention the glaringly obvious need for an extension and this is a source of shock, compounded by news that tens, nay hundreds of millions have gone unspent in the Department's school building fund, and returned to the exchequer.

The Board wishes to clarify the following issues:

Anyone reading our policy documents on child protection will realise that this and previous boards take this area of responsibility very seriously indeed. Members are glad that the Departmental review of our report acknowledges that fact. The board is fully compliant with circular 0061/2006 and, in line with that circular, continues to press the Dept. for a more comprehensive system of in-service in child protection.

The missing piece of the jigsaw for us is accessible, ongoing training for all staff as called for by the INTO and the government's own experts, appointed to review child protection in Ireland.

The board agrees that class size is a problem and looks forward to its reduction.

The board assumed that the WSE process would take account of the contextual factors of the school, as is stated in the code of practice. Circular 11/95 relating to Time in School did not comprehend totally inadequate toilet facilities for adults. The board's slight reconfiguration of the teaching day, while this situation persists, is without prejudice to the integrity of teaching time.

The board is confused by the reference in the report to "..other minor infrastructural deficits may be dealt with through the summer works scheme…" The Dept. considers all our infrastructural deficits as major, consisting of the need for 5 permanent classrooms, a PE hall, 4 SEN rooms, offices and storage rooms. We believe that such major construction and refurbishment cannot happen during a summer break. Minor deficits are dealt with under the minor works grant, as specified by the Dept.

In conclusion, the board of management of Glenswilly N.S. is painfully aware that:

All our special needs pupils receive their support in prefabs, totally unsuitable for the purpose. These vulnerable pupils, even the wheelchair bound, must, at all times, travel outside to access these cabins, sometimes in inclement weather conditions. Should they need to access a toilet while there, then they must brave the elements.

All temporary cabins are unfit for purpose. They are invariably damp and cold in winter and hothouses in summer. They are expensive to heat and the school must pay partial rental for them. We see this as a waste of scarce resources. The doors and windows warp, they are draughty and mouldy, yet their temporary status lasts till they rot. Their maintenance, in the dampest of climes,

is a constant drain on resources, both time wise and financially. As our extension looks further away than ever, the board has applied to have them replaced.

The 5% reduction in the grant for running a school, coupled with new and increased extra costs eg water charges amounting to thousands of Euro, refuse charges, lowering of grant for prefab rental etc. will make the running of a school financially impossible.

There is no specific targeted support provided by the Dept. for maths. Support in literacy is stretched to breaking point as it is based on enrolment figures of 2003. Overall enrolment in the cluster has increased by over 50 pupils since.

No funding is provided to this school to promote school inclusion. Other schools receive specific funding for this purpose.

Links with the NPPTI were never broken and 4 staff presently participate.

The board is not aware that the sections of the EPSEN act relating to SENO support in formulating IEPs had been enacted, as yet.

**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 recommendations are viewed as a means of building on our strengths and the board will give them due consideration.