An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Mhuire,
Páirc na Rian,
(Rampark National School)
Lordship, Co. Louth
Uimhir rolla: 18101F

Date of inspection: 16 September 2010

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire is a seven teacher school located in the Cooley peninsula. It has a pupil population of 149 pupils and is under the patronage of the Diocese of Armagh. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- Learning outcomes in Irish, Mathematics and English are very high and overall presentation of pupils' work is very good.
- The constant use of Irish as a classroom communicative medium is worthy of particular commendation.
- A very good balance between teaching methods is being achieved: lessons are well structured, ensuring pupils are attentive, respectful and very engaged in their learning.
- There is evidence of significant implementation of insightful whole-school policies in individual classroom practice.
- The commitment of the school to environmentally progressive projects and strategies is praiseworthy.
- The school and the local community and parish have formed strong links, leading to pupils having a very defined sense of place, belonging and identity.
- The quality of additional supports for pupils is of a very high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Procedures for safe parking and set down areas should be clarified and agreed by all parties.
- Improved communication structures should be put in place between the board and the general parent body.
- The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as a learning tool for individual pupils should be extended.
- In order to build upon the very good standards being achieved in Irish, it is now recommended that one subject be taught through Irish on a whole-school basis so as to provide a real context for the use of the language.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board displays a keen interest in and considerable enthusiasm for all aspects of school life. The board plays an active role in reviewing school policy and in the ratification

of curriculum plans. The commitment of the board to environmentally progressive projects and strategies is praiseworthy: noteworthy achievements, for example, have been made in the area of re-cycling. The current priority of the board is the safety of car-parking practices. A new playground is to be built adjacent to the school: it is recommended that discussion between school authorities and local council take place to ensure that all necessary safety features are put in place on completion of this project.

- The school and the local community and parish have formed strong links, leading to pupils having a very defined sense of place, belonging and identity. This is particularly evident in pupils' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their local history and environmental heritage. Members of the parents' association report that they would welcome even greater communication between the board and the parent community.
- Leadership in this school is particularly effective and is characterised by commitment to high standards in all areas of the curriculum. All records are meticulously maintained and proactive leadership has been applied to the area of whole-school planning.
- The work of the in-school management team is good, with clearly delineated areas of responsibilities assigned to and fulfilled efficiently by all post holders.
- Resources, while plentiful, are somewhat dated and need to be upgraded.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The approach to school development planning is ongoing and provides a very good framework to support a structured and developmental approach to the teaching of all subjects in the school. This planning plays a significant role in ensuring that there is continuity from year to year and consistency in approach and emphasis from class to class. To extend even further the collaborative process of this planning, it is recommended that parents should be involved more in aspects of the planning process.
- Formal school self-review is at an early stage of development at this stage, but there is evidence that the school community reflects on the impact of policies and practices on pupils' learning. For example, the anti-bullying policy, which is of a particularly high standard, was revised in light of this process of reflection and self-review.
- There is evidence of significant implementation of insightful whole-school policies in individual classroom practice. It was evident from individual teacher planning that integration, linkage and differentiation are core principles underpinning classroom planning in this school. Multi-grade class settings are planned for and subsequently managed with particular effectiveness in all classes.
- 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

- Gabhann cinnteacht bhreá leis an teagasc agus leis an bhfoghlaim atá ar bun sa scoil seo i dtaca leis an nGaeilge agus tá ard-chaighdeán á bhaint amach ag tromlach na ndaltaí san áhar seo. Cuirtear béim an-inmolta ar chumadóireacht neamspleách na teanga le go bhfuil sé ar chumas na bpáistí an foclóir ata ar eolas acu a úsáid go cumarsáideach. Léann na daltaí na téacsanna ranga go cruinn agus tugtar faoi deara go bhfuil tuiscint an-sásúil ar fad ag mórchuid acu ar a bhfuil á léamh acu. Tá caighdeán breá á bhaint amach ag na daltaí sa scríbhneoireacht. Moltar anois ábhar amháin trí Ghaeilge a mhúineadh go leanúnach chun comhthéacs fírinneach a chruthú don teanga.

  Good certainty applies to the teaching and learning of Irish in this school and a majority of pupils are achieving a high standard in this subject. A laudable emphasis is placed on the independent construction of language so that pupils can use their known vocabulary communicatively. Pupils read classroom texts accurately and the majority of pupils have a very good understanding of what is read. Good standards are being achieved in writing. It is now recommended that one subject of the curriculum be taught through Irish so as to provide a real context for the use of the language.

- Children are achieving high standards in English. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' reading and writing skills. Reading standards are very satisfactory in all classes and the majority of pupils are very confident readers. They are introduced to a variety of written genres and their writing is characterised by effective, appropriate and stimulating language use. Children read and recite poetry with evidence of good understanding of the language, atmospherics, feeling and rhythm of poetry. The teaching and learning of grammar is very good and helps to improve both children's accuracy in relation to the mechanical features of writing and also their knowledge about how language actually works. The standard of the pupils' handwriting is also laudable.

- Mathematical skills and concepts are carefully taught at all levels in the school and pupils' attainment levels are high. Pupils are taught in whole class, group and individual settings, as appropriate. At junior level, a sound mathematical basis is established through the practical activities associated with sorting and classifying and the use of concrete materials. There is a highly effective and tangible emphasis placed in all classes on the development of mathematical language. Pupils respond well to oral questioning and display a very good knowledge of number facts. Regular revision is undertaken and the pupils record their work appropriately. Written work is presented very carefully and this is regularly monitored by the teachers. There is commendable emphasis on regular testing in all classes. There is clear and praiseworthy evidence that assessment results are appropriately monitored and are being used effectively to inform planning for future learning. ICT is well use by teachers as a teaching tool, but is insufficiently used by pupils in their learning.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education (PE) is good: well-organised lessons were observed during the evaluation. These lessons took place in the adjacent GAA hall to which the school has welcome and daily access. Lessons promote the development of specific skills and ensured the participation and enjoyment of all the pupils. All pupils' efforts were actively praised and affirmed. A wide range of resources is in place to support the physical education programme. The pupils have opportunity to engage in games, dance, athletics and aquatics. The school have identified gymnastics as an area requiring attention and plans are in place to extend this aspect of the PE curriculum.

- Drama is very well taught and drama techniques, such as role-play and mime, are used as a methodology, encouraging independent work, positive group interaction and negotiation skills. Circle time is used effectively during warm up activities. Speaking and

listening skills are developed and creative expression is facilitated.

- A highly effective mixture of formal, whole-class teaching and collaborative learning activities involving enthusiastic pupil involvement, with laudable emphasis on the contribution of pupils in talk and discussion, was in evidence in all classes. Explicit teaching of key concepts, an expectation of high standards and caring celebration of pupils' interests and talents were a feature of teaching in all contexts.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Evaluation of work in the support context reveals excellent practice in this area. Planning for the delivery of this support is of the highest order. Targets are very clearly set and reviewed regularly. Teacher observation, standardised assessment, and some diagnostic testing are used in a highly effective manner to identify pupils' learning needs. A high level of collaboration between mainstream class teachers and support teachers characterises this work and the staff are to be commended for their vision in relation to this important aspect of support for pupils with special educational needs.

Published September 2011