An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

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Doire Glinne, Recess, Co. Galway
Roll Number: 18252D

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AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

This is a translation of the original report which was written in Irish.

1. Introduction

This two-teacher school is situated in Doire Glinne on the main road between Galway and Clifden. It is a Gaeltacht school, although Irish is not the primary language of the majority of pupils when they enrol in school. The school environment is a rich and stimulating work place, with a great number of play and learning facilities, including an organic garden, a recycling facility and games and learning areas. Thirty pupils attend the school, in classes from infants to sixth. Until last year, the school functioned under the DEIS *(Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)* disadvantaged scheme with the support of a co-ordinator. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- There is a very high standard of accommodation and resources in the school.
- The board of management, principal and staff are commended on the broadly based, effective education provided in the school.
- A close, positive relationship exists between all the partners in this school and, in their answers to questionnaires, parents and pupils confirm their satisfaction with the work of the school.
- The influence of school planning is evident in the day-to-day work and pupil progress is assessed on a continuing basis.
- The school has attained high standards in English reading, Irish, Mathematics and Geography.
- The teachers make continuing use of an effective range of teaching methods and a variety of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT).

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management conduct its business through the medium of Irish as frequently as possible, in order to provide functional support for the work of the school.
- It is recommended that the school plan be reviewed, so that the changes recommended in this report be implemented and to ensure more effective support for the language policies of the school.
- It is recommended that a staff skill development and experience policy be devised, so that optimum use might be made of the school's human resources.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is good. The pre-evaluation meetings were conducted mainly through English, at the request of the parties involved. The basic school structure was built in 1959 and the school facilities were renovated and extended in 2008. The board is commended on this work and on the support given to all the school partners in establishing a rich, creative learning environment. The school plans and policies are discussed and ratified, spending is kept under control, officers of the board are duly appointed and resources are provided for the implementation of the effective work programme. It is recommended that the board of management use Irish as frequently as possible in the management of the school, so as to provide explicit support for the language policies of the school.

- The principal is effective and functions with a positive educational vision which generates an open, pleasant learning atmosphere in the school. The principal prioritises a high standard of teaching and learning and she and her staff are complimented on the improvement in the use and speaking of Irish in the school in recent years.

- An extensive range of resources is available for each class in all subjects which are effectively used. In this school, productive use is made of the interactive white boards and of ICT across the curricular areas.

- The quality of communication between school and home is excellent. Parent-teacher meetings are convened annually and parents, grandparents, neighbours and guest speakers are welcome to support the work of the school. All the school partners participated recently in the upgrading of the outdoor and indoor facilities, as well as in the cultivation of the organic garden and in the Green Flag initiative. It was clear from questionnaires completed by parents and pupils during the evaluation that they are most complimentary of the work of the school.

- Pupils are highly motivated and participate in all aspects of the school work. They are respectful, mannerly and courteous towards one another and with other people. They are very understanding of those with special needs in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the planning process is good. The staff has developed an extensive range of policies in recent years. All policies are based on the school context and are reviewed regularly. Some policies are available in the two languages and effective use is made of them in the running of the school. Parents play an advisory role in policy formation. It is now recommended that Irish versions of the policies be compiled as they are being reviewed, and that all matters relating to teaching through Irish be incorporated in them.

- The quality of school self-evaluation is good. A long-term plan is devised every third year, with varying priorities pertaining to literacy, numeracy, pupils' education and communication with parents. Clear progress has been made in these areas. Priorities drawn from long-term plan are specifically included in each teacher's individual planning and progress is assessed by the staff on a regular basis.

- 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 also 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

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good and of a high standard in the main. Pupils' skills are fostered continuously through lesson content. There is effective participation in regional and national projects to reinforce pupils' interest and to promote parental involvement. There is an appropriate emphasis on language and on the development of the pupils' communication skills in both languages.

- The standard of spoken Irish in the school is good. An emphasis is placed on the acquisition of new vocabulary in the discussions conducted on various themes. The improvement attained in language fluency is commendable. The standard of reading is very good. Use is made of a variety of texts in order to cultivate pupils' vocabulary and reading skills. A wide range of writing activities is undertaken and there is an emphasis on accuracy, grammar and the monitoring in the work. It would be worthwhile increasing the investment in Irish books for the school library and introducing exercises in silent reading in Irish.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good in the school. Varied and creative methodologies were observed in all classrooms. Appropriate emphasis is placed on phonics and rhymes to support the development of pre-reading skills. Very good use is made of big books and novels. The interactive white board and charts are used very effectively. The whole-school plan for English writing, implemented by the teachers, is praiseworthy. Pupils articulate their views through a wide range of writing tasks. Teachers use continuous assessment to ensure that all pupils develop their literacy skills. Technology is used beneficially in the writing process.

- The quality of learning in Mathematics is good. A structured programme is implemented, with an on-going emphasis on mental work, problem solving and language development. Commendable use is made of concrete materials, of technology and of the school environment in consolidating conceptual understanding. It is recommended that more attention be paid to regular revision in Mathematics and to mathematical terminology in Irish.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Geography is very good. The human environment, the natural environment, and environmental awareness and care are addressed in the school programme and an understanding of local, national and international Geography is fostered in the study programme. The programme begins with the local and Galway area, moving on to the environment of Ireland and of Europe, in addition to global and spatial matters of interest through research projects and class investigations. The various curricular aspects are integrated and the pupils' skills of understanding, thinking and recording are fostered in the work process.

- The standard of assessment in the school is good. Standardised tests, diagnostic tests and informal assessments are administered, in order to measure pupil progress. Accurate reports are kept on all pupils and it would now be worthwhile adding structured profiles in Irish to these reports. The outcomes of standardised tests are analysed to facilitate the tracking of individual pupils' progress over the years and the identification of deficiencies within the school. It is now recommended that assessment software be used in order to guide learning on a whole-school basis.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- A policy of equality of access is productively implemented in the school. An individual learning programme is prepared for each pupil with special needs. The class teachers, learning support and resource teachers, and parents participate in the process. It is recommended that a copy of each learning programme be sent to the relevant parents.

- The quality of the teaching methods and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is good in general. Teachers work imaginatively and effectively to support their pupils. The learning support teacher has attained a very high level of professional development, with a view to making effective provision for pupils. It would now be worthwhile providing opportunities for skill and process development for the newly appointed part-time teacher. Supplementary teaching in English is organised on a general basis and in Mathematics for second class. It is recommended that the timetables of the learning support teachers be reviewed, to provide on-going support for more able pupils.

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