

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Mura's National School
Buncrana, Co. Donegal
Uimhir rolla: 16854V

Date of inspection: 26 October 2011



A N R O I N N | **DEPARTMENT OF**
OIDEACHAIS | **EDUCATION**
AGUS SCILEANNA | **AND SKILLS**

1. Introduction

St. Mura's National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe. The school caters for thirty-one pupils in two multi-grade classrooms. Attendance levels are good overall. The school participates in the School Completion Programme and in the Modern Languages in the Primary School initiative. At the time of the evaluation one teacher was on leave and a substitute teacher was in her place. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Visual Arts was inspected during the whole-school evaluation. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The board of management is very effective in supporting the staff and the work of the school.
- The principal provides very effective leadership and shows a very high level of commitment to the school and to the pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the four subjects evaluated is of a very high standard.
- Communication and relationships within the school and with the wider school community are excellent.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that planning for in-class team teaching to support pupils with additional needs is organised.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very effective. It is properly constituted, meets regularly and accounts are certified. The board discusses and ratifies school policies on an ongoing basis. It allocates funding to necessary refurbishment and the purchase of additional resources. Among the board's current priorities is the continued support of staff in the implementation of the school's 2011 improvement plan, especially in providing for literacy and numeracy development and the structured use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in the school. Updates on relevant departmental circulars are included on the agenda of board meetings, and school policies are shared with parents.
- The principal works in a highly effective and efficient manner. Exemplary work has been undertaken in the development of school plans and policies. Her professionalism and commitment is acknowledged by the board, parents and staff. She has undertaken many

professional development courses and she provides in-service for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) as part of the National Induction Programme for NQTs. The principal has initiated many worthwhile cross-border and cross-community programmes to encourage networking with other schools, including *Pushkin* and links with *Cumann Gaelach Cnoc na Ros, Doire*. The acting special duties teacher supports the work of the principal very well.

- School resources are managed effectively. The school building and environs present extremely well and the pupils enjoy contributing to the upkeep of the garden and flower beds. Attention is given to environmental awareness and the school has received an award in the Best Public Building Category of the local *Tidy Towns* competition on a number of occasions. The school is amply resourced with ICT, it is well-maintained and child-friendly. Classrooms are colourful, print and number rich. The school benefits significantly from the services of the part-time secretary.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very effective and parents support the work of the school very well. Parental support and involvement in school affairs and activities is significant. The school operates a shared reading programme in the junior classes each year and the parents participate in this programme to support their children in their learning. Regular newsletters inform parents and the local community of school news, projects and other school activities. The school benefits from its participation in the Annual Donegal Historical Society Schools Competition and it has built up a vast collection of local history and folklore. An annual school report and formal parent-teacher meetings ensure that parents are informed of pupil progress. In the questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, the majority of parents indicated strong agreement with the statements that teaching is good and that their children are doing well in school.
- Pupils are managed effectively and all pupils surveyed as part of the evaluation indicated in the questionnaires that this is a good school and that they are happy in school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Exemplary work has been undertaken on the systematic development and ratification of detailed school plans and policies. The whole-school planning documentation in Irish, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts provides an excellent framework to support curriculum implementation in both classrooms.
- Individual classroom and teachers' planning is of a very high quality. Teachers plan for the use of a variety of teaching methodologies, integration, assessment and differentiation.
- 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

- Múintear an Ghaeilge le cumas. Cuirtear béim an-mhaith ar éisteacht, labhairt, léamh agus scríobh. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta agus tuisceana mórchuid na ndaltaí an-mhaith. Baintear úsáid éifeachtach as cur i láthair teicneolaíochta chun an scríobh neamhspéach agus cruthaitheach sa Ghaeilge a chothú agus tá dul chun cinn an-mhaith a dhéanamh ag na daltaí. Is iontach mar a dhéantar comhtháthú idir an fhilíocht sa

Ghailge agus an Béarla agus na hAmharcealaíona chun foghlaim na teanga a éascú don dá daltaí.

- *Irish is taught effectively. Very good emphasis is placed on listening, speaking, reading and writing. The majority of pupils' reading and comprehension skills are very good. Powerpoint presentations are used effectively to promote independent and creative writing and pupils are progressing very well. Irish and English poetry and the Visual Arts are integrated successfully to assist pupils in their learning.*
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are of a very high standard. The pupils' understanding of a broad repertoire of poetry in the senior section is impressive. Emphasis on oral language development using listening and responding to story in the junior section is very effective. As the pupils progress to the senior section, contributions are encouraged and vocabulary is extended very well through discussion, debates and brainstorming activities. Standards in reading are excellent and most pupils in their responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicated that they are achieving well at reading. The school fosters a love of reading by visiting the local library on a weekly basis and it encourages reading for pleasure and research very well. Standards in writing are very good and pupils regularly write in a variety of genres and participate in *Write a Book* projects and in the *Pushkin* creative writing programmes. A variety of assessment modes is used to assess pupils' progress and assessment outcomes inform teaching very successfully.
- Teaching and learning in Mathematics are very good. During the evaluation, the school was participating in the National Maths Week and the pupils were engaged in mathematical games and mental maths activities. One of the lessons observed in the senior section made excellent use of 2D shapes/tangrams to promote active learning and the acquisition of skills in problem-solving. Overall, pupils demonstrate very good competency with regard to tables and mental computation. Both teachers use effective assessment for learning activities.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Visual Arts is very successful. The celebration of the pupils' work, including displays of fabric and fibre, collages, colour mixing, observational drawings in classrooms and along the corridor, is excellent. The study of the work of local artists forms part of each art lesson. The development of pupils' skills in looking and responding to art is taught very well. The school fosters an appreciation of art and craft created in the local community and pupils' awareness of the visual elements is developed very well.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement is of very high quality. Methodologies are learner centred and resources are used effectively to enhance the learning experience. Integration of curricular areas is very effective. ICT is used very well to promote reading and writing across the curriculum. Assessment results indicate that pupils are achieving very well, with some pupils achieving exceptional results in English and Mathematics.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. One support teacher provides support for ten hours per week. Teaching is structured and the lessons are paced well in support of pupils with additional needs. It is recommended that further planning for in-class team-teaching to support pupils with additional and special educational needs takes place initially in the junior section.

- The school receives very good support from the School Completion Programme coordinator. Various school activities are subsidised through SCP, including the reading buddies programme, literacy support, transfer programme, sporting activities and the Summer holiday programme. A part-time classroom assistant is subsidised through SCP. She supports pupils who have identified needs for eleven hours per week. The principal and classroom assistant have applied to take part in the *Catch Up Literacy Programme* as recommended by the National Behavioural Support Service. Through the use of departmental funding, the school provides a book rental scheme.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management, staff and school community of St Mura's N.S. would like to thank the reporting inspector for her courtesy during our whole school evaluation process.

We feel that the report affirms the hard work and diligence of our school staff, the dedication of the Board of Management and the commitment of the entire school community to maintaining and improving high standards of teaching and learning for children attending our school.

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 acknowledges the advice and recommendation contained in the W.S.E. report.

We have initiated in-class support in the junior classroom and hope to further develop this as part of our school improvement plan for literacy.