

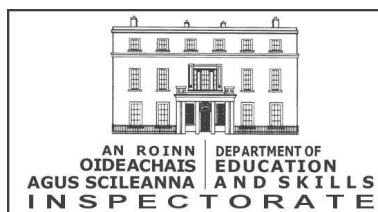
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Gaelscoil Dhochtúir Uí Shúilleabháin
Skibbereen, County Cork
Roll number: 20009G

Date of inspection: 7 June 2013



Whole-School Evaluation—Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

- Gaelscoil Dhochtúir Uí Shúilleabháin, Skibbereen, Co. Cork is a Catholic, co-educational primary school, under the patronage of Foras na Gaeilge. The school was founded twenty years ago and the whole project still operates in prefabricated rooms in a temporary building. Difficulties frequently arise with these prefabricated rooms, during bad weather in particular. Seventy-six pupils attend the school and they have three mainstream classes at present. Pupil attendance at the school is usually very good.
- During the assessment in June 2013, meetings were held with the chairperson of the board of management, with the principal of the school and with the officers of the parents' association. The quality of learning and teaching at every class-level was assessed and official school documents were reviewed. Furthermore, as part of the assessment, pupils in senior classes and all parents were given questionnaires to complete.
- It is evident that the school is operating on a very satisfactory basis at present, in the care of a principal and teaching staff who carry out their responsibilities in a committed and professional way.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The school community, including board of management, parents and teachers, co-operate conscientiously for the welfare of the children.
- There is an open, welcoming atmosphere in the school and there is a system in operation which promotes good discipline.
- The board of management attends carefully to its responsibility for running school events effectively.
- The principal directs the work of the school ably and energetically.
- Good practice was observed in the work of all the teachers and it is evident that the pupils are making significant progress.

The following **recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a three-year development plan be compiled for the school and, as part of that plan, that steps be laid out for the acquisition of a permanent school building, on a more central and more extensive site.
- It is recommended that a system be introduced which would give everyone with in-school responsibilities an opportunity to provide feedback on their work in that area, and that the board would undertake an open review of the school's priorities at the start of each new school year.

Although the standard of the work is good at present, it would be worth keeping an eye on pupils' skills in oral Irish in particular, and on the achievement of an appropriate balance between the teacher's voice and the pupils' voices in all classes.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- Irish is the normal language of communication in the school and all subjects, apart from English, are taught through the medium of Irish only. It is clear from the pupils' work and from interacting with them in all classes, that the quality of learning is satisfactory throughout the school. The teachers' enthusiasm in the teaching of Irish is commended and it is evident that the majority of pupils in this school have attained a good standard.
- Continuous assessment of literacy and numeracy is undertaken and a very good standard is achieved in these two aspects of the curriculum, on a whole-school basis.
- Although there is room for improvement in some aspects of the work, it is obvious that the pupils, including those with special educational needs, are progressing on a systematic, effective basis.

2. Quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching in the school is praiseworthy. All subjects are taught in an effective, stimulating way and it is clear that the richness of the pupils' language is being developed systematically and continuously. It is evident from parents' questionnaires and from talking to them, that the majority of them rate the teaching in the school as good. It is clear from pupils' questionnaires also that the majority of them consider this a good school.
- Although the number of disadvantaged pupils attending the school is not very large, the quality of teaching in special education contexts is very effective. A great effort is made to serve the needs of the various pupils and the attention paid to them by the teachers is impressive.

3. Support for pupils' wellbeing

- The pupils in the school are very effectively managed at present. The efficient teaching methodologies used and the pleasant atmosphere in the school help to foster pupils' interest and encourage their participation in the learning. The mutual respect observed between all teachers and pupils is commended. It is evident that this respect is based on co-operation, on the development of self-confidence and on effective management.
- The progress of all pupils is regularly monitored and assessed. Comprehensive learning programmes, based on the evidence derived through monitoring, are prepared for pupils with learning difficulties. Furthermore, every effort is made to prioritise early identification of learning difficulties and appropriate activities are devised and initiated to serve the pupils involved.
- 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*.

4. Leadership and Management

- The members of the board of management fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously, for the good of the school. They give effective support to the principal and play a central role in the general life of the school. During the assessment, the chairperson of the board mentioned that she was very satisfied with the standard of learning and teaching at present. She was very proud, also, of the support given by the parents' association and by the local community. The board's top priorities at present are to increase the number of pupils attending the school and to provide a permanent school building on a more spacious site, for them.
- Although there are three people on the in-school management team (the principal, the deputy principal and one teacher who holds a post of responsibility) and the team

does a lot of work for the good of the school, it is usually on a whole-school basis that this school community arrives at a consensus concerning various matters. The principal's open, understanding attitude helps to maintain the positive atmosphere of the school and she promotes co-operation between the management, the parents, the staff and all the pupils.

- To acknowledge the work of the in-school management team and promote it on a stronger basis, it is recommended that a system be initiated which would give everyone with specific responsibilities an opportunity to provide regular feedback on the progress of their work in that area, at staff meetings and at meetings of the board. It is also recommended that an annual review of the responsibilities of the in-school management team be conducted.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school regularly assesses and reports on the pupil's learning, the quality of the pupils' learning experience and the quality of the teaching. The current deputy principal has done excellent work on initiating a school self-evaluation system based on evidence and having specific targets for improvement. At present, the school staff have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses relating to the development of literacy in the school and it is evident that a good start has been formally made on school self-assessment.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to further engage in school improvement is good. However, there will be no improvement without a short-term development plan, setting out specific targets based on the school's main priorities. 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.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

This is a translation of the school response which was submitted in Irish

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Dhochtúir Uí Shúilleabháin along with the school community of parents, teachers and children would like to extend our gratitude for this positive report which we have received. We would like to extend particular thanks to the inspector for recognising our strengths and for having been so helpful and encouraging during the evaluation. It gives us hope to see that it is recognised that we will soon require a new building and the public will continue to co-operate to see this materialise shortly.

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 intends to adopt a three-year development plan. The primary focus is to build a permanent new building on a larger site that is more central to the town.

Duties are identified for the in-school management team. At the end of each year, a review of the work done will be conducted and new targets will be set. In addition, the board will have a greater input.

Teachers are providing greater opportunities for children to speak Irish in classrooms. We endeavour to achieve a balance between the voice of the teacher and that of the pupils. In Our opinion, this is a long-term, ongoing task that we are now addressing.

