

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Bhailenóra
Ballinora, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 184280**

Date of inspection: 26 January 2011



1. Introduction

Scoil Bhailineóra is a co-educational primary school situated in a rural area adjacent to the western suburbs of Cork City. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. It caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class and enrolments have increased substantially in recent years. Currently, there are 304 pupils on roll. Attendance levels are very good. The school has a central role in the community it serves and maintains strong links with local sporting organisations and the parish. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The board members work diligently on behalf of the school and discharge their duties competently.
- The school is led effectively by a hard-working, capable principal. The in-school management team work collaboratively with him and contribute substantially to the administration of the school.
- The teachers are capable professionals. Their considerable expertise in a range of curricular areas significantly enhances the learning experiences for pupils.
- The pupils are highly motivated and take pride in their work.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good.
- The school maintains very effective links with parents and the local community. The generous support of parents contributes considerably to the overall success of the school.
- The ancillary staff makes a valuable contribution to the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Greater use should be made of the monthly progress records to enhance the capacity of school management and teachers to engage in school self-evaluation.
- B'fhiú béim sa bhreis a chur ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach i dteagasc na Gaeilge agus níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí chun Gaeilge a labhairt
More emphasis should be placed on a communicative approach to teaching Irish and further opportunities should be provided for pupils to speak the language.
- A further emphasis should be placed on the development of pupils' independent writing skills.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Members of the board work diligently on behalf of the school. The board has submitted an application to the Department for a new school and has identified a site close to all local facilities. The board is actively involved in policy formulation and is kept informed regarding pupils' learning outcomes. It supports the continuing professional development (CPD) of the teaching staff.
- The board employs ancillary staff members who make a considerable contribution to the work of the school.
- The school is led effectively by a hard-working, capable principal. He fosters close working relationships with all partners and high levels of teamwork underpin the overall success of the school. The in-school management team members have clearly defined leadership roles and work collaboratively with the principal. They contribute substantially to the administration of the school and demonstrate a high commitment to the further development of instructional leadership.
- The school accommodation is inadequate for the large number of pupils on roll. However, the quality of the management of available resources is outstanding. The teachers are highly motivated, conscientious professionals. Their considerable expertise in a range of curricular areas significantly enhances the learning experiences for pupils.
- The school maintains effective links with parents and involves them in their children's education. The positive responses in the parents' questionnaires, issued as part of this evaluation, indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education provided. Parents are very involved in the life of the school, both on an individual basis and through the parents' association, and contribute extensively to its success. Parents are informed about their children's progress through parent-teacher meetings and written reports. In the interest of further development, it is recommended that the teachers give consideration to the use of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) report card templates.
- The teachers successfully provide the pupils with a high-quality learning environment. The pupils are highly motivated and take pride in their work. Interactions with teachers and pupils, and the outcomes of parent and student questionnaires, point to a positive, caring school climate.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. The teachers have devised a broad range of carefully considered curricular and organisational policies in collaboration with relevant partners. They participate in ongoing review of policies to address the developing needs of the school. Curricular planning is led effectively by the in-school management team and the relevant documentation is made available on the school's local area network (LAN). To enhance the capacity of the school to engage in school self-evaluation, it is recommended that the teachers make further use of the data arising from monthly progress records to inform the review process.
- All teachers carefully prepare long-term and short-term planning documents for their teaching. These plans are informed by the whole-school plan. Where planning is particularly effective, the learning intentions for pupils are clarified precisely. To extend this good practice further, linkage and agreed guidelines between class planning and the

whole-school plan is advised. Monthly progress records are maintained carefully and stored centrally.

- 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

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupils' achievement is very good, and high standards are in evidence. The teachers use their talents for the benefit of pupils. The strong involvement of pupils in Music, sport, healthy eating activities, the Green-Schools programme and a wide range of extra-curricular activities significantly enhances the quality of their learning. The teachers make impressive use of information and communication technology (ICT). Plans are in place to provide pupils with additional opportunities to access computers through the provision of a mobile computer bank.
- Tá dea-chleachtas i dteagasc na Gaeilge le sonrú sa scoil. Téann sé go mór chun tairbhe d'fhoghlaim na ndaltaí go gcuireann an fhoireann labhairt neamhfhoirmiúil na teanga chun cinn. Ag rangleibhéil ar leith, cuirtear cur chuige cumarsáide i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach agus leiríonn na daltaí dul chun cinn suntasach. B'inmholta an dea-chleachtas seo a chur chun cinn ar bhonn na scoile ina hiomláine agus níos mó deiseanna labhartha a thabhairt do na daltaí trí ghné eile den churaclam a theagasc trí Ghaeilge. Moltar chomh maith féiniarracht na ndaltaí a chothú a thuilleadh sa scríbhneoireacht.

Good practice in the teaching and learning of Irish is in evidence in the school. The emphasis which staff places on the incidental use of Irish greatly benefits pupils' learning. At particular class levels, a communicative approach is implemented effectively and the pupils demonstrate significant progress. It is recommended that this good practice be extended on a whole-school basis and that pupils be given further opportunities to use the language by teaching another aspect of the curriculum through Irish. It is also recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on the development of pupils' independent writing skills.

- The overall quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Effective work in the development of pupils' oral language skills with due emphasis on rhyme, poetry, storytelling and purposeful discussion is undertaken. The teachers deploy a wide range of suitable methodologies in the teaching of reading and pupils demonstrate high standards. Pupils are provided with a very good variety of reading materials and carefully planned strategies are in place to involve parents in their children's reading. The overall standard of pupils' writing is very good. A further emphasis on developing pupils' independent writing skills, particularly in conjunction with developing their ability to read, will enhance their learning.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a very good standard. Many pupils demonstrate positive learning dispositions and very good progress. A wide range of teaching methodologies is employed successfully. Effective use is made of the environment during lessons. At a variety of class levels, skilful use of concrete materials and differentiated learning activities are observed. Very good oral mathematics activities

are organised at particular class levels. Problem solving features prominently and good work is in progress to develop pupils' skills further.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is very good. A wide range of artefacts, photographs and historical materials is used to develop pupils' skills. Pupils engage enthusiastically in project work on both local and global themes. Use of the internet for research work is commended. Pupils display a good knowledge and understanding of topics learned. The teachers have agreed both local and global topics to be studied at each class level. Pupils' work is neatly recorded and well illustrated in their copybooks.
- The school engages in sound assessment practices. Assessment data is analysed and trends are noted and brought to the attention of teachers. A clear tracking system is in place to monitor pupils' progress from one class level to the next. Carefully marked copybooks were observed and where particularly effective marking was noted, pupils were given constructive feedback for improvement. The extension of this good practice on a whole-school basis is recommended.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- High quality support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. The support teachers liaise closely with one another, with mainstream teachers, with parents and relevant partners. Very good work is ongoing in the development of individual education plans (IEPs) and the staged approach is implemented. The teachers have introduced carefully planned models of in-class support which provide pupils with highly engaging learning experiences. There is clear evidence of pupils' progress. Effective approaches to differentiating the mainstream class programme are in place and their further development on a whole-school basis will greatly enhance pupils' learning. In particular, it is recommended that the use of play-based methodologies in the early years and the use of targeted group work should be extended.

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 welcomes the findings of the evaluation of our school. The Board is pleased that the inspectorate has identified that the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good in Scoil Bhailenóra, despite the inadequate nature of the school accommodation. The core function of any school is the delivery of a broad high quality education and we welcome the inspectors' recognition of this reality in our school.

The BoM acknowledges and appreciates the ongoing work of the entire school community in ensuring that the children of this locality continue to receive the best possible educational provision.

The BoM also acknowledges the manner in which the evaluation was efficiently and professionally undertaken and thanks the inspectors for the courtesy which was extended to all.

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 BoM notes the recommendations made by the inspection team and will ensure that the suggestions noted therein are acted on.

However, the Board also looks forward to an active engagement with the Building Section of the Department of Education in order to address the shortcomings in its provision of adequate accommodation for our pupils, as outlined by its inspectors.