

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

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Scoil Cholmcille Buachaillí,**  
**Douglas, Cork.**  
**Uimhir rolla: 13828F**

**Date of inspection: 23 November 2012**



**A N R O I N N** | **D E P A R T M E N T O F**  
**O I D E A C H A I S** | **E D U C A T I O N**  
**A G U S S C I L E A N N A** | **A N D S K I L L S**

## 1. Introduction

Scoil Cholmcille Buachaillí, Douglas, Cork caters for 501 boys from infants to sixth class operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. The school welcomes a diverse cohort of pupils including a large group of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and pupils attending the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) unit, comprising four classes. 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.

During this whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and History was evaluated. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 mainstream class settings, 9 support-teaching settings, and in 4 ASD classes.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The board works conscientiously and successfully for the school community.
- The principal has given dedicated service to the school and creates a positive atmosphere for the whole school community.
- Enthusiastic teachers are committed to the educational welfare of their pupils.
- Many strengths in teaching and learning were identified during the evaluation.
- The school is highly commended for establishing a students' council.
- There is a very active and supportive parents' association (PA) in the school
- Léiríonn na hoidí cumas an-mhaith sa Ghaeilge agus múintear an teanga go muiníneach. (Teachers demonstrate very good competency in Irish and the language is taught confidently).
- Effective use is made of mathematical resources during lessons.
- The emphasis on aspects of local history is most commendable.
- Specific teaching approaches are used effectively in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) classes.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board should now address matters concerning the length of the infant day.
- Formal meetings of in-school management team should be instituted to support strategic planning.
- Standardised test results should be discussed at staff and board levels.
- Teaching and learning strengths identified during the evaluation should be built upon on a whole-school level.
- Guidelines should be prepared to inform and further support the integration of pupils with ASD in mainstream.

### 3. Quality of School Management

- The board works conscientiously on behalf of the school community and has moved the new school project forward in a professional manner. Considered work on school policies has been undertaken and the views of the parents' association might gainfully be obtained when policies are reviewed. In the context of the school's attendance strategy, the board is reminded that their infant day is half an hour shorter than the normal school day, as set out by the regulations in Circular 11/95 from the Department of Education and Skills. In addition, some pupils for specific reasons go home early in the day. It is recommended that the board now address these matters. The board is commended for the manner in which it supports the professional development of teachers through funding professional development courses.
- The principal has given dedicated service to the school and helps create a positive atmosphere for the whole school community. He is committed to moving the school forward and a variety of successful initiatives, including the development of whole-school policies, have been established under his leadership. Duties assigned to the in-school management team are fulfilled diligently. The contribution of non-post holders who take on additional duties is praiseworthy practice. It is recommended that meetings of the in-school management team be convened at the various levels to ensure continued strategic development. Furthermore, the board is advised to request in-school management personnel to compile an annual short report on the completion of their duties.
- Enthusiastic teachers are committed to addressing the educational needs of their pupils. A mentoring system for newly qualified teachers is working effectively. The special needs assistants are complimented on the quality of care they afford pupils. They are proactive and make a meaningful contribution to classroom learning activity. To preserve confidentiality, it is recommended that notes taken by special needs assistants on pupils are maintained securely in the school.
- The school is maintained in good decorative order and internal areas contain attractive displays. The school is very well resourced in information communication technology (ICT) and has invested generously in a wide range of reading material. The school garden, sensory room and library are utilised effectively in complementing pupils' learning. School administration and maintenance are addressed in a competent manner by the secretaries and caretaker.
- The school is highly commended for facilitating the establishment of a students' council. The school warden system, involving senior pupils is working very effectively. The pupils are well-behaved and feel safe in school and these findings are reflected in the pupils' questionnaires. Pupils participate in a wide range of activities during and after school, including music, drama and sport.
- There is a very supportive parents' association in the school. Of late, the sensory garden has been built and the library has been refurbished with donations from their support. The association keeps the principal informed of its deliberations and he attends its annual general meeting. Very good communication processes with the broader parent community are well established. Parents are very happy with the provision for pupils with

special educational needs and parents' questionnaires reveal overall high levels of satisfaction with the school.

#### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- Whole-school plans include informative detail and provide clear guidance to practices at classroom level. In mainstream classes, relevant planning is undertaken conscientiously by all teachers. Long-term and short-term notes are aligned faithfully and whole-school plans are in teachers' folders to aid further planning alignment. In addition, teachers prepare diligently useful electronic and physical resources for lessons. In ASD classes, teachers' planning indicates that the pupils' access to the curriculum is appropriately differentiated. The quality of Individual Education Plans is very good and targets are specific. The implications of other co-occurring needs such as visual impairment could be considered further with assessments of functional vision.
- 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**

- Many strengths in teaching and learning were identified during the evaluation. Consideration should now be given to extending these strengths and instances of very good practice on a whole-school level. Work on compiling standardised test results is beneficial and results should be discussed at staff and board levels to identify needs and trends.
- Léiríonn na hoidí cumas maith sa Ghaeilge agus múintear an teanga go muiníneach. Sna naoináin agus sna bunranganna, múintear an teanga go díreach bríomhar le spreagthaigh shúl agus le gníomhaíocht oiriúnach. Sníomhtar rainn, amhráin, obair le puipéid, obair ranga agus obair bheirte isteach sna ceachtanna go sciliúil. Cuirtear béim chuí ar athrá agus ar shluafhreagairt i múineadh an chomhrá. Léiríonn na daltaí suim agus cumas sa teanga.
- Sna meánranganna agus sna hardranganna, múintear comhráití beaga, treoracha, ceisteanna agus abairtí iomlána go díreach muiníneach. Cuirtear an teanga múinte i bhfeidhm le hobair bheirte éifeachtach. Scríobhann na daltaí go néata agus b'fhiú anois scríbhneoireacht shaor agus foirmeacha leanúnacha eile a chothú. Múintear an léitheoireacht go dílis agus léann na daltaí go cumasach muiníneach. Moltar anois breis béime a chur ar cheisteanna ar an léitheoireacht a chleachtadh ó bhéal i mbeirteanna in ionad na freagraí a scríobh an t-am ar fad.
- Teachers display a sound grasp of the Irish language which is taught confidently in the school. In infants and junior classes, the language is taught directly and actively with the aid of visual stimuli and appropriate activity. Rhymes, songs, work with puppets, whole class work and pair work are woven skilfully into lessons. Appropriate emphasis is

placed on choral repetition in the teaching of oral language. Pupils demonstrate interest and ability in the language.

- In the middle and senior classes little dialogues, directions, questions and full sentences are taught directly and confidently. The language taught is reinforced with effective pair work. The pupils write neatly and it would be worthwhile now to cultivate skills in free writing and other forms of narrative. Reading is taught faithfully and pupils read confidently and capably. It is now recommended that questions at the end of reading extracts are practised orally in pairs rather than over relying on written follow-up.
- In infants and junior classes, good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to teach the English phonics programme. The teaching of rhyme, improvisational drama and the CAPER programme aid learning outcomes effectively. In these classes, in-class support for literacy is a strong feature of the work aided by very effective programmes, including the Aistear programme. In middle classes and senior classes, well considered oral English lessons were observed and topics from other curricular areas, SESE and SPHE in particular, are discussed and extended in well-structured debating lessons. Pair-reading strategies are in use and novels are used very effectively. In some of the middle and senior classes a process-writing strategy is employed and very good examples of process-writing are included in writing folders. In the senior classes a very structured cooperative teaching approach to developing writing skills is employed and very high standards are achieved. These commendable approaches could now be built upon on a whole school level.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good and is characterised by effective use of resources. Maths areas have been developed and active learning methodologies incorporate group and pair activity and very effective use is made of team teaching/parallel teaching with in-class support from learning support/resource teachers. Structured problem-solving activities are a positive feature of classroom practice and pupils' work is monitored regularly with positive and developmental comments. Overall the standard of pupils' work and presentation is good, and is very good in many cases.
- The teaching of History is effective throughout the school. Teachers provide good learning environments for History and good use is made of artefacts, of the particular experiences of local people and visits to historical sites. It is commendable that teachers use a range of successful methods and there was no over-reliance on textbooks. The emphasis on local history is praiseworthy and local trails have been developed. In most classes timelines are used to help pupils develop a sense of chronology. History is successfully integrated with other aspects of the SESE and English programmes. Historical novels are used very well. The results of projects in History were displayed impressively. Good practice incorporating use of time lines and artefacts and the creation of class museums could be built upon at a whole-school level.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The reorganisation of special-education provision addresses efficiently the fragmentation of previous service to pupils. Teachers work in a caring and professional manner with individuals and groups during support sessions. Closer alignment of the work in mainstream and support classes would benefit the development of withdrawal support. It

is recommended that in-class support structures are extended and teachers are advised to identify definite programmes for implementation. Good practices in the development of learning plans for pupils were identified during the WSE. Most class teachers share their long-term and short-term plans with support teachers and this good practice should now become school policy.

- Within the ASD centre, each of the four classrooms are well-equipped with designated areas for social and group work. Attention is directed to reducing auditory, visual and olfactory stimuli. There is a high level of collaboration between teachers and SNAs and due attention is paid to security and safety. The learning environment is TEACCH friendly with designated areas for various activities. In-class work is characterised by the key features of an ASD centre and include predictability, structure and routine in the management of activities. A range of ASD specific teaching approaches is used effectively including PECS and TEACCH.
- Teachers have engaged in ASD specific training and other special-education related courses. Cooperation among pupils from mainstream and ASD classes is a feature of practice. While a range of suitable assessment strategies is used to monitor progress, a list should be compiled of the range of assessments that may be used over time with the pupils, especially in relation to communication, social development and behaviour. In order to ensure that all teachers possess an adequate level of knowledge and understanding regarding the implications of ASD, teaching guidelines should be prepared that can, where necessary, inform practice in mainstream classes.

# **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 acknowledges that the report affirms the many strengths of teaching and learning in our school in addition to the commitment shown by enthusiastic teachers to the educational welfare of our pupils.

The Board notes that the report acknowledges the quality of Irish teaching in our school. We also note our school strengths in particular in such areas as the teaching and learning of Maths, Local History and in particular the varied approaches used in the ASD Classes.

### **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 will consider the issue of the length of the Infant school day and will consult with all relevant partners in this matter.