An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Newtown Dunleckney NS,
Bagenalstown, County Carlow
Uimhir rolla: 01215C

Date of inspection: 23 May 2011
1. Introduction

Newtown Dunleckney NS is a co-educational primary school in the parish of Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow under the patronage of the acting Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The attendance of the one hundred and twenty-six pupils enrolled is very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to 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 and staff provide an inclusive, holistic learning environment for all pupils.
- The principal teacher provides purposeful leadership. He is supported by a dedicated in-school management team whose members undertake all assigned duties professionally.
- A child-centred approach is implemented successfully in the management of pupils.
- Comhtháithítear an Ghaeilge go h-eifeachtach i rith an lae in ngach rang. Tá ábhair clóbhuailte Gaeilge le feiceáil ar fud na scoile. **The Irish language is successfully integrated throughout the day in all classes. A print-rich environment for the Irish language is evident throughout the school.**
- Pupils participate in well-managed activities in the special education setting.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A cyclical approach to whole-school planning is advised, to include the planned targeting of each curriculum area in order to best support teaching and learning. Teachers’ long-term plans should be based on this school plan and should be specific to the needs of a particular class.
- In their classroom planning, teachers should address the needs of all pupils by placing more emphasis on the development of targeted differentiated approaches which stem from their assessment practices.
- Further focus on the standard expected in all written activities is advised.
- Consideration should be given to the review of the targets set in Individual Education Plans so that they relate more specifically to the identified needs of individual pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted. Meetings are held regularly and suitable minutes are maintained. Accounts are audited in accordance with Section 18(1) of the Education Act 1998. Policy development is discussed regularly at board meetings. The board ratifies all school policies. Significant work in the development of the school plan has been undertaken recently. A review of the enrolment policy is recommended to
ensure adherence to equality legislation in relation to the enrolment of pupils with special educational needs. Board members are committed to the continuous development of the school. Members avail of training provided by the Catholic Primary School Management Association.

- The principal teacher provides purposeful leadership and undertakes his management duties in a dedicated manner. He actively promotes the Irish language. He affirms staff members and fosters a welcoming, inclusive school climate. He is committed to developing his curriculum leadership role to ensure a consistent, cohesive approach to curriculum implementation.

- The in-school management team undertakes all assigned duties professionally. Members’ collegial outlook contributes significantly to the positive school climate. In order to ensure a consistent approach to the prioritisation of each curriculum area, it is advised that the assigned curriculum area attached to each post be reviewed and changed periodically.

- The parents’ association ably supports the work of the school. Parents pay a meaningful role in fundraising and sacramental and extra-curricular school events. They are consulted on all school policies and have constructive input into policies of specific relevance to them. Annual parent-teacher meetings and end-of-year reports inform parents of their child’s progress. The parents’ association recognises the welcoming, inclusive atmosphere that prevails throughout the school. Results of the parent questionnaire indicate that all parents agree that the school provides a safe environment for their child.

- A child-centred, proactive approach is implemented successfully in the management of pupils. Pupils are very well-behaved. They display pride and interest in their work and co-operate enthusiastically with their teachers. They are eager to engage in discussion and participate fully in all classroom activities. Teachers acknowledge pupils’ efforts consistently.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- There is scope for improvement in relation to the quality of school planning and self-evaluation. Organisational plans offer a positive basis for the day-to-day management of the school. Curriculum plans are mindful of curriculum requirements and reflect the needs of the school. It is recommended that a cyclical approach to planning be devised and implemented. This process should include the planned targeting of each curriculum area in order to support more fully teaching and learning.

- There is scope for development in the area of classroom planning. It is necessary to ensure that long-term plans are based on the school plan and are specific to the needs of a particular class. Some differentiated planning for each class group and for pupils with special education needs is evident within short-term plans in some classes. This good practice should be extended to ensure the needs of all pupils are appropriately addressed in planning and preparation in all classrooms. In classes where a review of planning is required, more consideration should be given to delineating teaching methods with less emphasis on textbooks. Common planning templates should be considered to support this process. It is recommended that assessment practices become integral to each teacher’s classroom planning so that pupils’ achievement can be monitored and suitable planning can take place to support pupils of all abilities.
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 teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Good practice observed includes the sharing of objectives with pupils, well-paced lessons, suitable group and pair work and the consolidation of lessons. In some instances, teacher-directed, whole-class teaching is the main methodology used. Greater emphasis on interactive teaching and co-operative learning opportunities is recommended to facilitate pupils in becoming more active learners in all instances. Some interesting projects are carefully displayed. The quality of written work in many classes is poor. Further focus on the standard expected in all written activities is advised.

Tá caighdeán sásúil á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga agus tá réimse maith oiriúnacha in úsáid. Tá obair mhaith ar bun ó thaobh forbairt foclóra na ndaltaí de i ngach rang agus léann siad go hábalta. Is soiléir go mbaineann na daltaí suite agus taitneamh as an teanga agus bionn rainn agus filiocht á aithris acu go minic. De ghnáth bionn an scribhneoireacht bunaithe ar cheisteanna a fhreagairt ó na leabhar saothair atá in úsáid. Moltar anois aird a dhíriú ar fhorbairt scileanna de i ngach rang. Tá abhair chlóbhualtach Gaeilge le feiceáil ar fud na scoile.

A satisfactory standard is achieved in teaching and learning in Irish. A positive attitude towards the language is nurtured, and a suitable range of resources is used. Good work is undertaken in the development of pupils’ vocabulary in all classes and pupils read with competence. Pupils clearly enjoy the Irish language and they recite a variety of rhymes and poems with enthusiasm. Written exercises are generally work-book based. Consideration should now be given to the development of pupils’ writing skills, particularly at senior level. The Irish language is successfully integrated throughout the day in all classes. A print-rich environment for the Irish language is evident throughout the school.

Overall, teaching and learning in English is good. Well-structured lessons enhance pupils’ oral language and listening skills, and they display confidence in using language. Pupils in all classes learn a variety of poems and rhymes which they recite enthusiastically. Good practice is undertaken in the development of phonological and phonemic awareness. Due emphasis is placed on the extension of reading strategies and on the ability to respond to text, resulting in pupils’ achievement in reading being generally good. In the pupil questionnaires, the majority of pupils think they are doing well at reading. Pupils’ independent writing skills are fostered and they are afforded opportunities to write in a variety of genres for a variety of audiences.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. All strands are attended to at each class level. Mathematics-rich environments and a wide variety of resources enhance the teaching of Mathematics. Suitable emphasis is placed on the development of pupils’ mathematical language. The local environment and pupils’ own experiences are used constructively to support teaching and learning. Lessons are generally well-paced with evidence of some good practice in relation to pupils’ problem-
solving skills in a number of classes. This practice should be extended throughout the school. Pupil questionnaires indicate that the majority of pupils think they are doing well in Mathematics.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is good. Discrete drama lessons are of a high standard and pupils co-operate and communicate in making Drama. All the elements of Drama are explored appropriately. A wide variety of resources is used to good effect and there is good integration with other curriculum areas. A high level of pupil participation indicates that pupils enjoy and benefit from drama classes. The reinforcement of the drama contract within individual classes ably supports all pupils in remaining on task during drama lessons.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Pupils participate in well-managed activities mainly on a withdrawal basis in all special educational settings. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are organised in consultation with parents and class teachers. Targets are revisited annually. A review of these targets is recommended to ensure that they relate more specifically to the identified needs of individual pupils. Short-term plans should be based on these identified needs. The inclusion of clear objectives and methodologies is also advised to enhance these plans. In order to facilitate a focus on the specific needs of individual pupils, it is further recommended that classroom teachers incorporate the targets outlined in IEPs in their short-term plans. Informal meetings occur between the special education team and class teachers. A more structured approach to these meetings is advised. Parents should be provided with a copy of their child’s IEP.

Published November 2011
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M. of Newtown Dunleckney N.S. are satisfied with the W.S.E. report of our school except for one sentence on Section 5 (page 3). In the second last sentence it states: “The quality of written work is poor.” While the standard of penmanship needs further focus we feel this does not equate to the quality of all written work. A blanket statement that all written work is poor, is an unfair statement and doesn’t reflect what was said at the oral report.

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 school has embarked on a new handwriting programme to improve the pupils’ penmanship.