An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Kildimo National School
Kildimo, Co. Limerick
Uimhir rolla: 06516S

Date of inspection: 19 January 2011
1. Introduction
Kildimo N.S. is a mainstream, co-educational school situated in the village of Kildimo. It is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Limerick Diocese. The school has a staff of six mainstream class teachers, a learning support teacher and a resource teacher for pupils with special educational needs. The school places high emphasis on regular pupil attendance and as a result the attendance of the majority of the 160 pupils enrolled in the school is very good. 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 is highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The close collaboration of all partners contributes significantly to the successful management of the school and to the sustainment of a positive school atmosphere which seeks to affirm and encourage pupils.
- The principal is committed to the maintenance of a quality educational experience for the pupils and to the pursuit of excellence in the quality of learning and teaching.
- A committed and enthusiastic in-school management team discharges its duties in a highly professional manner.
- The teachers adopt a very professional approach towards their work and it is evident that they are committed to providing a high quality education for the pupils in the school.
- There are significant strengths in relation to the quality of learning and teaching in this school.
- The school’s provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high standard.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that an annual report, outlining the work of the board be communicated to parents.
- It is recommended that the school engage in reflective and systematic school self-evaluation processes which have the explicit purpose of improving the quality of pupils’ experiences and standards of attainment.
- It is recommended that a wider range of assessment modes be identified and utilised to enable class teachers to record judgements about the progress individual pupils are making in attaining curriculum targets.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management provides strong and effective leadership to the school. The board is properly constituted and it meets regularly. Detailed minutes of meetings are maintained. Individual roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined and assigned duties are undertaken effectively. The work of the board is compliant with statutory requirements and departmental guidelines. It is recommended that an annual report outlining the work of the board be communicated to parents.

- The principal articulates a clear vision for the school. She is committed to the maintenance of a quality educational experience for the pupils and to the pursuit of excellence in the quality of teaching and learning. She is ably supported in this work by a deputy principal and a special duties post holder. The in-school management team works collaboratively with the teachers and staff in the creation of a supportive working environment. It is now recommended that the curriculum leadership roles of post holders be further developed and that an increased focus be placed on the identification of whole-school priorities for development which focus on further improving the quality of pupil attainment.

- The board is highly praised for the manner in which it manages the resources available to the school. The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. A wide range of supportive teaching and learning resources are utilised effectively to support teaching and learning.

- The management of relations and communication within the school community is of a very high standard. Parents are informed of their children's progress very effectively. The parents' association is highly supportive of the work of the school. Parents support and participate in the life of the school in a planned and purposeful manner.

- The management of pupils is of a very satisfactory standard. Common expectations of behaviour are applied consistently across the school. Pupils are facilitated to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities. An appropriate focus is placed on the implementation of strategies that promote positive self-image and self-esteem among the children. Pupils, in their responses to questionnaires issued during the evaluation, express very high satisfaction with the school. They would, however, welcome increased opportunities to engage in group work and to use computers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The whole-school plan is well organised and contains a comprehensive number of organisational policies and curriculum plans which are of a high standard. The board is praised for the regular review and ratification of policies. It is recommended that the school now engage in reflective and systematic school self-evaluation processes which have the explicit purpose of improving the quality of pupils' experiences and standards of attainment. This will necessitate the drafting of a development plan in which key strengths and areas for development are clearly identified.

- All teachers prepare comprehensively for the delivery of a broad curriculum to the pupils. It is recommended, however, that a common approach to the compilation of monthly progress reports be agreed and that these reports be utilised more effectively to monitor and evaluate the curriculum delivered and to ensure continuity and progression between class levels.
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 in Kildimo N.S. is of a very high standard. Teaching approaches, including the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), are well matched to pupils’ learning needs and preferred styles of learning. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for and to be active in their own learning. Tasks and activities are well matched to the needs of individual pupils, thereby ensuring that all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level. Pupils’ attainments in English, Mathematics, and Irish are of a very high standard. Pupils’ attainment in History is of a satisfactory standard.

- Irish is taught enthusiastically throughout the school. The staff merit much praise for their efforts in promoting speaking, reading and writing. Accordingly many of their pupils achieve significant levels of fluency in topics which are of particular relevance to their own lives. The pupils succeed creditably in their reading and the majority of them read with meaning and understanding. It is recommended that more small books be provided for the junior classes and various types of text be supplied for the senior classes to further enhance the very good work undertaken. Written work in Irish is attended to and it is evident from the work samples that a creditable standard is reached by the pupils.

- The school is highly commended for the manner in which pupils’ literacy and oracy skills are developed. Pupils’ attainment in this area is of a very satisfactory standard. The enhancement of literacy areas in classrooms and the re-organisation of class libraries would further enhance the very good work observed during the evaluation period. Pupils’ written work is regularly monitored and is of a high standard. It is recommended that a whole-school approach to the writing process be developed. Facilitating pupils to write in a wider variety of writing genres should also be emphasised.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a very high standard. During the evaluation period some exemplary practice in the teaching of Mathematics was observed. All teachers are cognisant of the need to address mathematical language, of developing mathematical skills and of the beneficial use of concrete materials to develop and consolidate pupils’ mathematical knowledge. It is recommended that increased focus be placed on embedding pupil learning in authentic problem-solving contexts. Increased use of the immediate and local environment is also recommended.
• The pupils’ display a positive interest in History and speak knowledgeably about the themes and topics covered. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the exploration of the pupils’ personal and family history in the infant and junior classes. Commendable examples of the effective integration of History with other curriculum areas are evident in the senior classes. Local studies are well developed though this aspect of the curriculum might be explored further through the organisation of field trips and history trails in the local environs. Artefacts, photographs and some samples of primary and secondary evidence feature in many lessons and this good practice might now be extended to all class levels. An increased emphasis might also be placed on the development of pupils’ skills to work collaboratively through their engagement in research and project work.

• Standardised tests are administered annually to all pupils and the results of these tests are utilised effectively to identify pupils who may be experiencing learning difficulties. Weekly spelling and arithmetic tests are utilised by many teachers. Teacher-designed tests are also used in other curriculum areas. However, it is recommended that a wider range of assessment modes be identified and utilised to enable class teachers to record judgements about the progress individual pupils are making in attaining curriculum targets.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• A learning support teacher and a special educational needs teacher provide very comprehensive support to pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties. Carefully judged provision is made for individuals and groups of pupils with differing abilities. Targets, tasks and activities are carefully selected to take account of pupils’ individual learning needs and to assist them to overcome the difficulties they are experiencing.

• All pupils in receipt of support are making very good progress in their learning. The support team systematically tracks the progress of individual pupils and administers appropriate diagnostic tests to assist in the identification of suitable learning targets.

• Parents are consulted in the formulation of individual education plans (IEPs) and pupils’ progress is communicated effectively to parents at regular intervals.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The evaluation process was a positive experience for the school community. The content of the report is fair, accurate, reflective and affirming of what we strive to achieve in the school. The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the professionalism and openness extended to the whole school community by the members of the inspectorate team.

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 recommendations made by the inspectors have been taken on board and implementation has begun.

- The Board of Management has prepared an annual report on its work which will be communicated to parents at the end of this Board's term.
- The school recognises the importance of engaging in reflective systematic school self-evaluation to improve the quality of pupils’ experience. Identification of key strengths and areas for development will help to plan for ongoing improvement in attainment standards and learning experience.
- As a staff we are engaging in identifying a wider variety of assessment models, to enable class teachers to record progress of individual pupils.