Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Banogue N.S., Banogue, Croom, Co. Limerick
Uimhir rolla: 07222G

Date of inspection: 18 January 2012
1. Introduction

Banogue N.S. is a Catholic, co-educational, mainstream school situated in the parish of Banogue. It has a staffing of three mainstream teachers, a learning-support teacher and a resource teacher for pupils with special educational needs. A total of sixty-six pupils are currently enrolled in the school. Pupil attendance is of a very good standard. 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 of management is supportive of the work of the school
- The school is well resourced and available materials are successfully utilised to support pupil learning. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are very effectively employed by all teachers.
- Teachers display a capacity and a willingness to engage in school improvement initiatives.
- Pupils are respectful and courteous. They co-operate willingly with their teachers and with their peers.
- The quality of teaching and learning within the support settings is of a very high standard.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the roles and responsibilities of individual board members be clearly defined and that training be availed of to assist the board in discharging its role as outlined in section 15 of the Education Act (1998).
- A whole-school approach to the identification of priorities for development in which emphasis is placed on raising the attainment levels of pupils and on augmenting the quality of teaching and learning should be outlined.
- It is recommended that whole-school approaches to teaching and learning in the subjects evaluated be devised. Emphasis should be placed on the identification of content based on the life experiences, interests and experiences of the pupils.
- It is recommended that a wider range of assessment modes be employed and that data generated be utilised to track the progress of individual and groups of pupils and to devise programmes appropriate to their stages of development.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted. Collectively the board discharges its duties in an effective manner. School accommodation is maintained to a good standard and supportive resources are purchased to assist teaching and learning. It is however recommended that the roles and responsibilities of individual board members be clearly defined and that training be availed of to assist the board in discharging its role as outlined in section 15 of the Education Act (1998).

- The principal effectively discharges her administrative and pastoral duties. The deputy principal works in close collaboration with the principal. It is recommended that the duties of the deputy principal be reviewed in line with Department circular 07/03. It is further recommended that the in-school management team, under the direct leadership of the principal, focus on the drafting of a strategic plan to advance teaching, learning and pupil attainment.

- The school is well resourced and available materials are successfully utilised to support pupil learning. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are very effectively employed by all teachers. Pupils would benefit from the re-organisation of classroom libraries and the development of the school’s mathematical environments.

- Representatives of the recently established parent association are highly supportive of the school. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. End-of-year progress reports are issued to parents of all pupils. Responses to questionnaires distributed to parents indicate satisfaction with some areas of the school’s provision. The board however needs to address those areas where parent responses are not as positively disposed. It is recommended that the board draft, ratify and communicate a grievance procedure. It is further recommended that the board, in consultation with parents, outline an effective means of communicating with the broader parent body.

- Pupils were observed to co-operate with their teachers and peers. They were courteous and well behaved throughout the evaluation period. Pupils benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular activities promoted by the school. Pupil responses to questionnaires issued indicate that they would welcome greater feedback from teachers regarding their progress in reading, Mathematics and homework.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Teachers have drafted a wide range of organisational policies which are, in general, of a high quality. There is scope for development regarding the curriculum plans viewed. These documents need to give clear guidance to teachers to enable them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum within a multi-class teaching context. Arrangements for the monitoring of their implementation and the evaluation of their impact on pupil learning should also be outlined. All plans and policies should be ratified by the board. It is recommended that a cyclical plan for the review of these documents be drafted.

- All teachers prepare long and short term planning in preparation for their work. The quality of this planning varies from fair to very good. Monthly progress reports are systematically completed and stored centrally. It is recommended that a common approach to planning and recording be devised and that an emphasis be placed on continuity and development of curriculum delivery between classes and on ensuring that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum.
A systematic approach to school self-evaluation has not yet been established. However, teachers are commended for outlining priorities for development on an annual basis. Minutes of regular staff meetings indicate that there is a focus on reviewing the school’s provision for its pupils. It is recommended that a more systematic approach to this work be undertaken. A whole-school approach to the identification of priorities for development in which emphasis is placed on areas relating to raising the attainment levels of pupils and on augmenting the quality of teaching and learning should be drafted.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

There is scope for development regarding the quality of teaching and learning in the school overall. A number of positive aspects of practice were noted during the course of the evaluation. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was of a good to very good standard and lessons were well presented, paced and developed. ICT was very effectively utilised. The quality of pupil learning in English and Mathematics is, in general, of a good standard. Less effective outcomes were evident in Irish and History where learning was assessed as fair. Teachers’ long and short-term planning indicates that there is a need to review the manner in which the curriculum is managed in multi-class settings and that lesson content, which reflects the interests and experiences of the pupils, is identified. Clear pupil learning outcomes need to be outlined and whole-school approaches to teaching and learning, which are cognisant of the range of pupil attainment and abilities, should be clarified.

In English, pupils’ oral language skills are fair to good and some pupils present as confident communicators. Pupil learning outcomes in reading are of a good standard. However there remains a need to explicitly teach reading strategies at all class levels, to extend the use of the novel, story and poetry and to group pupils based on their attainment. There is significant scope for development regarding the development of pupils’ creative writing skills and in ensuring that pupils are afforded opportunities to write in a range of genres at all class levels. It is recommended that the school review current practices regarding the teaching of English and that a whole-school approach which focuses on the raising of pupil attainment be outlined.

In the teaching of Irish teachers over rely on the textbook scheme and as a result the approaches adopted do not reflect those of the Primary Curriculum. It is evident that many pupils have significant difficulty in speaking continually in different contexts. A graded scheme is followed in the teaching of reading. Many of the pupils read with reasonable accuracy. Some very good work was observed with regard to writing in different class levels but pupils seldom write personal stories. It is recommended that a
comprehensive review of the teaching of Irish be undertaken to ensure that the programme adheres to the aims and principles of the Primary Curriculum.

- Some very good lessons were observed in the teaching of Mathematics. Concrete materials were utilised to very good effect and oral activities featured in each lesson. Pupil attainment varies from fair to good with some pupils achieving very high standards. The concept of number is particularly well developed. It is recommended that assessment data be utilised to differentiate provision in accordance with the range of abilities, that problem solving strategies be further developed and that greater emphasis be placed on concept and skills development across each strand of the curriculum.

- Stimulating History lessons were observed which succeeded in engaging the pupils and progressing their knowledge and skills. However, pupils had significant difficulty in recalling learning from previous lessons. It is important that pupils, through their exploration of the past, acquire knowledge and concepts while simultaneously developing important skills and attitudes appropriate to their individual stages of development. It is recommended that the present, textbook based, delivery of the curriculum be reviewed with a view to the selection of content and approaches which actively engage the pupils in the exploration of local, national and international historical events and in the development of associated skills.

- There is scope for development in relation to assessment practices in the school. Good practice was observed in relation to the administration of standardised tests in literacy and numeracy and the communication of results attained by pupils to their parents. Individual teachers engage in the summative assessment of pupil progress in some areas of the curriculum. Very good practice was observed by teachers working in support settings. In these incidents a wide range of assessment data is utilised to develop individual learning targets for pupils. It is recommended that a wider range of assessment modes be utilised and that data generated be utilised to track the progress of individual and groups of pupils and to devise programmes appropriate to their stages of development.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is of a very high standard. Within the support settings, teachers have devised high quality individual learning programmes for pupils. Lessons observed were highly focused on addressing the identified needs of these pupils. Approaches and methodologies employed admirably succeeded in engaging the pupils and progressing their learning. Within the classroom setting teachers were observed to provide individual support to pupils in need and this good practice is praised. It is recommended that increased emphasis be placed on early intervention initiatives and on the provision of in-class support where appropriate.

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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 Board of Management, staff and general school community wish to extend a sincere thank you to the Department of Education & Skills Inspectorate for the constructive manner in which the Whole School Evaluation was carried out.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Both the Board of Management and the staff of the school are committed to the implementation of the recommendations in the report. Recommendations of the report are currently being addressed in the development of a three year School Improvement Plan which is also being informed by the Draft School Self-Evaluation Guidelines as formulated by the Inspectorate and the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People. 2011/2012.