An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Lauragh National School
Killarney, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 08530W

Date of inspection: 12 October 2011
1. Introduction

Lauragh National School is a rural co-educational school under the patronage of the catholic Bishop of Kerry and has a current enrolment of 18 pupils. Enrolment in the short-term is predicted to remain at 20 pupils. Pupil attendance levels are high and the school authorities encourage same in line with National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and Departmental guidelines.

The school’s motto is appropriately entitled “Cáird eas agus Cineálta” (“Friendship and Kindness”) and the school participates in an impressive variety of initiatives and programmes which include: literacy, a science project sponsored by the Irish American Partnership, Green Schools, local history, Tidy Towns and local environmental and artistic activities sponsored by Kerry County Council. The school has also attained “healthy school status” from the HSE.

During the whole-school evaluation, teaching and learning was observed in two mainstream classrooms and in three additional teaching support settings. Questionnaires were issued to all parents and to pupils from third to sixth classes. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school is run effectively and provides a well balanced education in line with the requirements of the primary curriculum.
- The board of management is very competent.
- The principal discharges her duties commendably and succeeds in creating positive working conditions in the school.
- School facilities are very good.
- Progress in relation to primary literacy and numeracy objectives is commendable.
- All parents surveyed consider the school to be well run, that the quality of teaching in the school is very good and a great majority of parents state that their children like school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that all reasonable efforts be made to improve enrolment in the school.
- It is recommended that the parents’ role in formulating school policies be further extended.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management has been established in line with official requirements and discharges its duties conscientiously. The board is highly commended for its efforts in refurbishing the school building in line its original Victorian architecture. It is equally commended for providing an attractive range of teaching resources together with high quality recreational areas. Significant investment has been made in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is used purposefully by teachers on a regular basis.

- Despite the fact that the school does not have a formal Parents’ Association, all parents surveyed state that they feel welcome in the school. In addition, there is clear evidence of significant contributions from parents or grandparents to the learning process in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good and has been reviewed recently. Praiseworthy emphasis is placed on important aspects of language teaching in both languages such as new language input, teaching language across the curriculum, teaching key reading skills as well as reading for pleasure. Positive features of the school's mathematics plan include linkage with other aspects of the curriculum, active learning and problem solving.

- All members of the teaching staff complete useful long-term and short-term work plans in respect of the curricular areas.

- The school authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with the most recent circular on child protection and 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 the school is very good. A significant majority of pupils consider their lessons to be interesting and all parents surveyed believe that teaching is good in the school. In addition, the board of management clearly indicated their satisfaction with the quality of education provided in the school during the course of the evaluation.

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go han-chúramach sa scoil. Moltar an aire a dhírítear ar theagasc teanga nua agus is móir is fíú an comtháthú a chothaítear idir na scileanna teanga go minic. Moltar go speisialta an aire a dhírítear ar dhhrámaíocht, nuacht, filiocht, scéalta agus ar sceitísí. Dá réir sin, éirionn leis na hoidí díríú go taitneamhach ar chumasráid nádúrtha le linn na gceachtanna. Caitear chomh thorthúil céanna le teagasc na léitheoireachta agus na scribhneoireachta agus is inmholtta go speisialta an t-ábhar a fhósiltear i nuachtán na scoile.

Irish is taught very carefully throughout the school. The emphasis placed on teaching new language at all levels is focused and praiseworthy as is the linkage which is
promoted between the four language skills. The use of drama, news items, poetry, story material as well as sketches is a prominent feature of the work. Reading and writing are also taught fruitfully throughout the school and the Irish material published in the school newspaper is especially praiseworthy.

- In relation to the teaching of English, the pupils’ quality of spoken language is systematically developed throughout the school and most pupils express their views with confidence. Due emphasis is placed on the principal skills of reading and writing at all levels. In this regard, pupil responses in questionnaires indicate that the great majority believe that they are doing well in reading. Such lessons are well structured and the writing process is carefully developed from the pre-writing stages to the more advanced levels of independent and creative work.

- The Mathematics curriculum is taught purposefully throughout the school. Almost all parents state that the school is helping their children to progress in Mathematics and most pupils believe that they are doing well in this area. Key approaches such as active learning and differentiation are regular features of the lessons. Accordingly, essential concepts and skills are suitably mastered. Important resources such as a plentiful supply of concrete materials as well as ICT are used. In addition, the pupils’ immediate environment is also successfully utilised and Mathematics centres of interest are carefully prepared in each classroom. Additional approaches to problem solving were fruitfully discussed during the evaluation.

- History is taught very effectively throughout the school. The lessons are well structured and the pupils display a keen interest in the topics presented. The emphasis on local history is a particularly commendable feature of school work. In this regard, the efforts made by the school authorities to preserve the historical nature of the building merit much favourable comment as does the nature and quality of pupil records in this subject area.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is presently supported by a shared learning-support teacher, a shared resource teacher for pupils with a learning disability and by a part-time learning-support teacher. These teachers work in close collaboration with their mainstream colleagues, with parents and with other relevant professionals. They have drawn up clear learning objectives and display significant levels of professional expertise in their work. The focus placed on assessment for learning (AfL) is very commendable as is their competent use of a wide range of learning stimuli.

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