An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Lissivigeen Mixed NS,
Killarney, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 08791E

Date of inspection: 21 Nov. 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire, Lissivigeen, a co-education national school under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Kerry, is located four kilometres from Killarney. Currently, two hundred and thirty three pupils are enrolled in the school. Enrolment trends indicate consistent growth in recent years. 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 commended for the high standard of facilities it provides and for its professional approach to supporting the work of the school.

- Very good leadership exists within the school and a supportive, collegial environment enables critical self-evaluation, improvement and reflection and places a strong emphasis on teaching and learning as the core element in that process.

- The school has a dedicated team of professional teachers who are committed to encouraging all pupils in their care to develop their talents and abilities in a positive, supportive environment.

- Generally, standards of pupil achievement are very good and pupils are positively engaged in the learning process.

- The school enjoys very high levels of parental and community support.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the parents’ association consider affiliation to the National Parents’ Council in order that they might avail of formal training opportunities and further develop their important role as partners in the school community.

- It is recommended that a more formal role for parents in the review of school policy be developed by the board in line with evolving school priorities.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management has proactively and successfully pursued a school improvement agenda. The school has been extensively refurbished in recent years and a broad range of suitable resources has been provided in support of teaching and learning. The provision of ICT as a learning tool is at an advanced stage in the school and ICT is incorporated successfully into many classes. The board oversees the financial affairs of the school responsibly and accounts are certified in line with Departmental guidelines and best practice.
• The formal in-school management team is comprised of the principal and the deputy principal, with three special duties’ posts. Collectively and individually they make a positive contribution to the leadership and management of the school. Their work is disseminated effectively and a culture of openness to change and professional development permeates the school. The in-school management team articulates a clear vision for the school and oversees the implementation of the school plan effectively. The principal plays a key role in this process and he has successfully created a positive atmosphere in which colleagues feel empowered and valued and in which teaching and learning is central to the decision-making process. In order to further improve in-school management structures, it is recommended that, within a school self-evaluation framework, more formal procedures be put in place to acknowledge the role and contribution of in-school management personnel.

• Parental questionnaire responses indicated the school has very high levels of support across a broad range of variables. In almost all categories of response, parents expressed very high levels of support for the work of the board and the staff. Responses provided, in almost all cases, a significant endorsement for the work of the school.

• Pupils are encouraged to be active agents in the learning process and age-appropriate opportunities for active, independent and collaborative learning are provided on a regular basis. General levels of pupil achievement are high and responses to pupil questionnaires indicated an almost exclusively contented group of learners with positive self-esteem. Pupils are treated fairly and a calm and positive atmosphere permeates the school. Pupils also stated that they did not receive enough computer usage time. However, this has to be reconciled with the effective and consistent use of the newly installed inter-active whiteboards as a teacher resource. Advice was given with regard to the development of ICT skills as well as to its effective use as a learning tool across the curriculum.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• School planning is at an advanced stage in the school. All plans are relevant to the school, reflect current practice and are cognisant of the legal framework in which schools operate. A high level of compliance with Departmental guidelines in respect of the provision of education is evident. Good communication structures exist and information is shared with the relevant partners and stakeholders. In order to further enhance practice, the school is encouraged to develop more formal structures whereby parents can contribute to the review and development of official school planning documents.

• All teachers prepare their work in a professional manner. Long-term and short-term plans and monthly progress records are maintained and learning objectives are clearly stated, curriculum based and differentiated in line with individual and group needs. Work is carefully matched with the general level of pupil ability. In order to further improve good practice, it is recommended that the principal and staff consider the development of an agreed internal summary progress template which would, on a monthly or termly basis, allow for easier access to curriculum progress in specific subject areas.

Child protection policy and procedures

• 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

A broad range of effective teaching methods is used throughout the school. Lessons are, generally, focused, stimulating and relevant to the needs of pupils. Learning is incremental and developmental and there is progression from class to class. Teachers have high and realistic learning expectations of their pupils and these are communicated positively and consistently. There is a welcome lack of dependency on textbooks.

- Cuirtear an Ghaeilge chun cinn go córasach sa scoil. Moltar caighdeán Ghaeilge na forne agus an tsíl ina úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar theanga chumarsáide trasna na scoile ar fad. Sonraitheatmáistear Ghaelach sa scoil agus feictear mórán samplaí fónta de dhea-chleachtais i dteagasc agus i bhfoghlaímn na Gaeilge le linn an tréimhse mheasúnaíthi. Bhi formhór na ndaltaí sásta tabhairt faoi chomhrá i mbeirteanna nó ina n-aonar agus bhi siad ábalta ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagraí. Moltar an tsíl ina spreagtar na daltaí chun suime agus chun rannpháirtíochta le linn na gceachtanna. Bhí scileanna éisteachta, cumas cainte, cumas léitheoir eachta agus cumas scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí forbartha go maith sna ranganna.

Irish is systematically progressed in the school. The standard of Irish among the staff and the informal use of Irish throughout the school are commended. An Irish atmosphere is created. Many good examples of good practice in teaching and learning of Irish were observed during the evaluation. Many pupils were willing to engage in conversation in pairs and individually and they ask and answer questions ably. The methods employed to encourage pupil interest and participation in lessons are commended. Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are well developed in classes.

- English is taught effectively in the school. Suitable methods and practices were observed at all age levels. Pupils are exposed to a wide variety of print and there is a considerable focus on the teaching of reading as a key skill, developing reading competencies and generating a lively interest in reading as a leisure activity. Team teaching is a strategy being used effectively to support individual readers at the early stages of attainment and there is a considerable focus on clear diagnosis and on early intervention for pupils experiencing specific difficulties with regard to reading attainment. Generally, the literacy attainments of pupils are high.

Across the school there is evidence of a balanced oral, reading and writing programme within which the abilities of pupils are nurtured through age-appropriate oral language exercises, their ability to think through conversation and questioning and their clarity of thought and imagination through writing. There is a consistent emphasis on language development across the curriculum and pupils are, generally, articulate and confident. The staff has already begun to engage with the principles of the national literacy strategy and will, in due course, set out comprehensive targets and actions with regard to literacy development as a key school objective in the short-term future.

- The teaching of Mathematics is a significant strength in the school. A wide variety of suitable methodologies are employed and classes are, in many cases, integrated effectively and are cross-curricular. There is a considerable emphasis on skills and concept development but these are tested in real-life contexts on a regular basis. There is also a considerable emphasis on problem solving and on the best use of mathematical equipment. Whole school planning for Mathematics is firmly reflected in practice and there is consistency in the implementation of the programme across the classes. Pupils
display positive attitudes to Mathematics and are consistently exposed to good practice in the teaching of the subject. Pupil attainment levels in Mathematics are good and pupils have positive images of themselves with regards to mathematics learning.

- SPHE is taught very effectively in the school and a positive atmosphere exists. Good relationships underpin all school related activities. A positive code of behaviour, including an anti-bullying policy, is consistently implemented in a fair manner. Teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions are respectful. Pupil behaviour during the course of the evaluation was very good and a calm and well ordered atmosphere was apparent. The principles of the SPHE curriculum, good self-esteem, respect for oneself and others, pride in ones community, the values of healthy relationships, and citizenship are firmly embedded in the policies, routines and practices of the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and pupils are effectively supported by a team of three teachers and one SNA. These individual staff members play a central role in the attainment of school targets with regard to literacy and numeracy development. Pupils with special educational needs are treated in an inclusive and equitable manner underpinned by a clear school policy which informs practice. The work of the special educational team is planned collaboratively and delivered by means of a wide range of methodologies including, withdrawal on an individual or group basis, in-class support or other interventions of a short-term nature such as team teaching. Observed lessons were conducted effectively and learning targets were clear and unambiguous.

The work of the team is supported by very good assessment practices. A wide range of practices is in place including assessment for and assessment of learning. Teachers display a thorough understanding of the understanding, progress and achievement of learning outcomes of individuals within their respective caseloads. Assessment records give useful and relevant information and this is shared with parents in line with departmental guidelines.

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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

On behalf of the whole school community, the Board of Management of Lissivigeen N.S. would like to thank the Inspection Team for their professionalism, the very positive report on our school and for making the evaluation process a positive and worthwhile experience.

We are delighted that the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of our parents, pupils, teachers, principal and board members have been recognised and affirmed.

We also welcome the recognition of the high quality of teaching, learning and pupil support which is taking place on our school.

This WSE report will encourage us all to further enhance the standard of education within our school.

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, Principal and staff are in the process of facilitating the recommendations of the report and will endeavour to implement these as soon as possible.

The Board have already spoken to the Parents Council and they will consider affiliation the National Parents’ Council.