Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Listellick National School
Tralee, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 09260B

Date of inspection: 01 October 2010
1. Introduction

Listellick National School is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. It is a mixed school with eight mainstream class teachers, four support teachers and an administrative principal. There are 212 pupils enrolled in the school.

The attendance of the majority of pupils is good. However, the attendance of a minority of pupils is a cause for concern. It is recommended that the current attendance strategy be reviewed in order to ensure that the absences of individual pupils are tracked and addressed. It is reported that all pupils transfer to post-primary school.

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 quality of teaching and learning in this school varies from high to very high in standard.
- The board of management is committed to the provision of high quality educational experiences for all of the pupils.
- A positive school climate which is characterised by very good relationships in the school community is evident.
- The special education needs team provides very good support for pupils with learning difficulties.
- The parents and the pupils are highly supportive of the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board should, as a matter of priority, ensure that the school complies fully with the requirements of Circular 11/95 (Time in School).
- The principal, in collaboration with the post-holders, should develop curriculum leadership roles and school self-evaluation processes to ensure the successful implementation of planned school improvement initiatives.
- Whole school curriculum plans should be reviewed in respect of the direction they provide to individual teachers in relation to continuity and progression in pupil learning between classes.
- Priority should be given to reviewing the implementation of the school’s relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy.
- Systems should be developed to ensure that the progress of individual pupils is monitored and centrally recorded and that the school registers are accurately and regularly maintained.
- A wide range of assessment modes is in use in the school. While very good practice was observed in all classes particularly in relation to the assessment of learning, there remains scope for development regarding the use of the data generated to inform classroom practice. It is recommended that this be addressed and that Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools be consulted in so doing.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management operates effectively. It is properly constituted, meets on a monthly basis and minutes of meetings are recorded. Individual board members manage specific projects and oversee their implementation. Finances are prudently managed and certified on an annual basis. The board is aware of the school's strengths and challenges and is working strategically to address the needs of the school. Good communications systems are in evidence between the board, the school and the parents. The priority of the board is the provision of a new school building and the maintenance of a safe place in which pupils can learn. The work of the board would be enhanced through the identification of strategies which would enable it to "evaluate the effectiveness of its operations, including the quality and effectiveness of teaching in the school and the attainment levels and academic standards of students" as outlined in the Education Act 1998.

- The board should as a matter of priority ensure that the school complies fully with Circular 11/95 (Time in School). During the evaluation process it became evident that lunch breaks were extended to allow pupils to eat their lunches. The circular states "when children are allowed to have lunch in the classroom prior to the official commencement of the recreation interval the length of the school day must be extended correspondingly".

- It is evident that a number of pupils are being retained in classes in contravention of Circular 11/01. It is recommended that this practice be reviewed.

- The principal successfully promotes a positive school atmosphere and has high expectations in respect of the quality of learning and teaching in the school. It is recommended that the principal prioritise the development of organisational and management strategies in the school as these are areas of significant need. Specifically, systems should be developed to ensure that the progress of individual pupils is monitored and centrally recorded and that the school registers are accurately and regularly maintained.

- Individual post-holders have been assigned a range of curricular, organisational and pastoral duties which they discharge conscientiously. The principal in collaboration with the post-holders should develop curriculum leadership roles and school self-evaluation processes to ensure the successful implementation of school improvement initiatives.

- The school is well resourced with a wide range of teaching and learning materials. The school has recently invested in interactive whiteboards which teachers utilise to good effect. In general, the school accommodation is fit for purpose. Pupils’ responses in the questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that they have limited opportunities to engage with information and communication technologies (ICTs). It is recommended that additional resources in this area be provided as soon as opportunities present.

- The recently introduced practice of enabling staff to teach in different class contexts is praised. This practice should now be formalised through the drafting of a staff rotation policy.

- A very active parents’ association is involved in a range of support initiatives in the school. The parents’ representatives reported that there was open and trusting communication between the parents and the school. Meetings have been organised between representatives of the parents’ association and the in-school management team.
Parents’ responses to the questionnaires distributed during the evaluation indicate high to very high levels of satisfaction with the school.

- The management of pupils is of a very high standard in this school. It is evident from the responses of pupils to questionnaires administered during the evaluation process that discipline and anti-bullying policies are implemented effectively in the school. Pupils are kind and courteous in their interactions with their peers and others. During the evaluation all pupils presented as enthusiastic and well motivated. Consideration should now be given to the establishment of a students’ council.

Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Good curriculum plans have been drafted and ratified by the board in all subject areas. There is evidence of staff collaboration in the development of these plans. It is now recommended that a strategic plan be drawn up to evaluate the impact of these plans on pupils’ learning. Plans should be reviewed in respect of the direction they provide to individual teachers in relation to continuity and progression in pupil learning between classes. It is recommended that priority be given to reviewing the implementation of the relationships and sexuality education policy. In general, organisational policies are of a good standard and their implementation assists in the smooth running of the school.

- All teachers prepare good to very good long-term and short-term planning. Monthly progress records are maintained. Some very high quality approaches to individual teacher planning and reporting were observed. It is recommended that the staff develop a common approach to planning and reporting based on such exemplars. Furthermore, it is recommended that monthly progress records be utilised to inform the process of school self evaluation.

- 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 was found to range from good to very good in standard. Classrooms are very well organised with supportive displays of illustrative materials and pupils’ work. Concrete materials are utilised effectively to support pupils’ learning. Pupil learning is incrementally developed and individual support is provided for pupils experiencing difficulties. Pupils’ responses in the questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicated very high satisfaction with the manner in which the teachers’ explain the content of lessons.

- Is inmholtai cumas labhartha na ndaltaí sa teanga sa scoil. Úsáidtear raon leathan d’áchmhainní mar thaca don chlár teanga Gaeilge agus éirionn go maith leis na daltaí na bunscileanna a thabhairt leo. Tá prionta sa timpeal lacht le feiceáil go forleathan sna rang seomraí agus go ginearálta, dírítear aird céimniúil ar an ngramadach agus ar Ghaeilge fheidhmiúil sa scoil. Baintear úsáid rialta as scéim grádaithe chun léiththeoireacht fheidhmiúil na ndaltaí a chothú agus b’fhíú anois infeisteacht bhreise a dhéanamh sa stoc leabhar Ghaeilge. Léirítear taispeáints suimiúla de scriobhneoireacht na ndaltaí go
The children’s oral language ability is of a praiseworthy standard. A wide range of resources is utilised to support the Irish language programme and the children achieve a good standard in the basic skills of the language. A print-rich environment is in evidence throughout the school and in the classrooms and in general appropriate attention is focused on grammar and formal Irish in the school. A graded reading scheme is in use to develop the pupils’ formal reading skills. It would be appropriate now to consider investment in an additional stock of Irish reading materials. Interesting displays of pupils’ writing are displayed effectively throughout the school. High standards are achieved in this work particularly in the higher classes.

The quality of the teaching and learning in English is of a good to very good standard. Some examples of good practice were observed in the teaching of specific oral language skills. It is recommended that a whole school approach be adopted to ensure that all pupils’ oral language skills are systematically developed throughout the school. The teaching of reading is carried out to a very high standard. The provision of a wider range of opportunities for pupils to read at levels commensurate with their abilities would further enhance pupil attainment in reading. Examples of pupils’ writing in copybooks and on display in classrooms were of a very good standard and reflected a wide variety of writing genres.

Pupils’ attainment and the quality of teaching observed in Mathematics were of a very high standard. All lessons were logically structured and teachers based the teaching and learning explicitly on the content objectives from the mathematics curriculum. This was clearly reflected in the outcomes of these lessons. Teachers employed a very effective range of approaches and methodologies and successfully addressed the different learning abilities of the pupils. Pupil attainment could be further enhanced by placing an increased focus on problem solving and mental mathematics.

A positive school climate was in evidence in this school. Both pupils and parents indicated very high levels of satisfaction in respect of the pastoral care available in this school. Discrete lessons in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are timetabled weekly. The school’s SPHE plan should be reviewed in order to ensure continuity and progression in pupil learning across each strand of the curriculum.

A wide range of assessment modes is in use in the school. While very good practice was observed in all classes particularly in relation to the assessment of learning, there remains scope for development regarding the use of the data generated to inform classroom practice. It is recommended that this be addressed and that Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools, which is available at www.ncca.ie, be consulted in so doing.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

The work of the special education team is characterised by high levels of effective collaboration and innovative practice. A range of support initiatives has been successfully implemented through in-class support and team-teaching. In general, the quality of the lessons observed in the different settings was of a high standard.

Programmes of work for individual pupils and groups are well researched and planned. Pupil progress is systematically recorded and it is evident that pupils are making progress commensurate with their abilities. A very comprehensive range of diagnostic testing is used to inform teaching and learning.
There is a need to review the current special education needs policy in order to provide clarification around selection procedures for children accessing support teaching.

It is recommended that a review of the structure of support provision in school be carried out in order to ensure that, where possible, pupils are only supported by one member of the special education team.

It is recommended that the social skills development of all pupils be addressed in a classroom setting and that the current practice of withdrawing pupils for this purpose be discontinued.