Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Upper Newtown NS
Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla: 09967U

Date of inspection: 5 December 2011
1. **Introduction**

Upper Newtown NS is a co-educational, rural, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are 50 pupils enrolled currently and attendance rates are 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 of management, parents' association and parent body provide ongoing support to the school, ensuring that it plays a central role in the local community.
- The principal provides commendable leadership and capably directs the work of the school.
- The teachers are committed, hardworking and professional.
- The pupils are motivated in their learning, demonstrate high levels of confidence and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are very good.
- Overall, satisfactory standards are achieved in Irish, English and Mathematics.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- As curriculum plans are reviewed, they should be contextualised further to reflect the evolving needs of the school, with a greater focus on pupil learning outcomes and the achievement of continuous improvements in teaching and learning.
- In Irish, it is advised that new phrases be practiced more and linked to the pupils' prior knowledge, and that personal writing be developed further.
- In English, further attention should be paid to systematic literacy skill development for early and emergent readers, particularly in the area of phonological awareness.
- In providing for pupils with additional learning needs, the school is advised to develop in-class supports and team-teaching models, especially as part of the early intervention programme.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is commended for the significant support provided to the school and for the provision and maintenance of a comfortable school building and
grounds. It plays an active role in the review of school policies. The board's decision to begin the external certification of school accounts is welcomed.

- The principal provides commendable leadership and capably directs the work of the school. She has developed a strong sense of cooperation between members of the school community. She is positively supported by the deputy principal. While the duties of the post of deputy principal are wide ranging, regular review is advised to ensure that they reflect the ongoing needs of the school.

- The quality of school accommodation is good. Resources to support teaching and learning are plentiful and are used effectively. While there has been significant investment in ICT, the pupils’ use of ICT should be extended in some classes. This concurs with the pupil questionnaire responses, where fewer than half say that they get to use computers regularly.

- Effective procedures have been developed to ensure meaningful communication with parents and the wider community. The parents, along with the parents’ association, provide valuable practical and financial support to the school. The results of the parent questionnaires demonstrate that all parents are happy with the school; the school is welcoming of them and has a good reputation in the community.

- The pupils are eager and motivated in their learning, and cooperate with the school’s rules and code of behaviour. They demonstrate high levels of confidence and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. The pupil questionnaires indicate that all pupils are happy coming to school and think that their school is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is satisfactory. Curriculum plans provide some degree of guidance to teachers. As curriculum plans are reviewed, they should be contextualised further to reflect the evolving needs of the school. These plans should incorporate a greater focus on pupil learning outcomes in all subject areas and the achievement of continuous improvements in teaching and learning. This practice will support the ongoing process of school self-evaluation, where laudably, areas in need of improvement have been identified and suitable action plans have been devised. The further involvement of parents in aspects of the planning process is advised.

- The teachers provide some useful long-term and short-term planning which generally reflects the pupils’ learning needs. Monthly progress records are maintained carefully.

- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Highly commendable practice was observed in some classrooms and included skilful classroom management, purposeful teaching and use of resources, and opportunities for the pupils to work collaboratively. In the questionnaires administered during the evaluation, all pupils indicated that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
• Good practice has been developed in the area of pupil assessment. Information regarding pupil progress in many curricular areas is gathered systematically through a range of assessment practices and key information is recorded appropriately. The school has recently begun the analysis of standardised tests results and the data are being used beneficially to inform development needs in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

• Ar an iomlán, tá teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge sásúil. Is léir go bhfuil iarraidh dairire á dhéanamh dearadh dearach a chothú i leith na Gaeilge. Úsáideann na hoidí modhanna múinte gníomhacha ina n-áirítear cluichí, rólghlacadh, rannta agus amhráin. I ranganna áirithe, moltar a thuilleadh deiseanna cainte a chruthú do na daltaí agus an foclóir agus na frásaí nua a cheangailt le réamhfóghlaim na ndaltaí. Léann na ndaltaí téacsanna éagsúla le muinín aca ba chóir a thuilleadh béime a leagadh ar scileanna luath-léitheoireachta. Cé go bhfuil caighdeán ach bhfuil a thuilleadh dh na scríbhneoireachta sásúil, moltar an scríbhneoireacht phearsanta a chotú.

Overall, teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory. It is obvious that a sincere effort is being made to create a positive attitude to Irish. The teachers use active teaching methodologies which include games, role play, rhymes and songs. In some classes, it is advised that further speaking opportunities be created for the pupils and that new vocabulary and phrases be linked to the pupils’ prior learning. The pupils read a variety of texts with confidence but there should be further thought given to the development of early reading skills. While the standard of writing is satisfactory, it is advised that personal writing be developed further.

• The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Oral language is given due attention and the pupils are articulate in talking about their work and in expressing their opinions. They are given regular opportunities to engage with a wide variety of reading materials, with particularly effective use of novels in middle and senior classes. Further attention should be paid to systematic literacy skill development for early and emergent readers, particularly in the area of phonological awareness. Effective practice is evident in English writing. Varied opportunities to write in different genres are provided and appropriate emphasis is placed on the writing process.

• Generally, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is satisfactory. The teachers place a suitable emphasis on discussion, the use of manipulatives and the relating of mathematical concepts to real-life experiences. Problem solving is being addressed effectively in the school. Mental Mathematics and tables have been identified as priorities for development and the strategies in place to address them are to be commended. The continued monitoring of progress in this area is advised.

• Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in SPHE is very good. Lessons are taught competently and a good range of strategies and approaches is used at each class level. A laudable emphasis is placed on the promotion of a positive school climate. The inclusive atmosphere and respectful relationships within the school are tangible evidence of this strength. While the programme in Relationships and Sexuality Education is delivered appropriately, the RSE policy should be reviewed to ensure that it fully reflects the school’s current practice.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is commendable. Lessons are well structured and paced. Planning and record keeping are of a good quality and positive pupil progress is in evidence. While the school’s SEN policy guides provision for pupils, it should be revised to ensure that it incorporates the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning as outlined in Circular 02/05. Currently, the pupils are
withdrawn for support. The school is advised to develop in-class supports and team-teaching models, especially as part of the early intervention programme.
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 and staff of Newtown Upper N.S. wish to sincerely thank the Inspector for the professional and cooperative manner in which the WSE was carried out in 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.**

We are pleased that the many positive aspects of our school received due recognition. We intend to implement the key recommendations in the report.