An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Clohanbeg National School
Clohanbeg, Cree, Kilrush, Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla: 11234M

Date of inspection: 23 November 2011
1. Introduction

Clohanbeg National School is a mainstream co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The thirty-six pupils currently enrolled are taught in two multi-grade classes. The current enrolment figure is somewhat higher than that pertaining in 2004 when the last evaluation report was issued. School attendance is very good.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in November 2011. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Science. 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 and the community, for which this school is the primary focal point, provide enthusiastic support for the school.
- The teachers work diligently to provide effective teaching in an atmosphere conducive to the growth of mutual respect and inclusiveness.
- Pupils’ behaviour is very good.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement, in the areas evaluated, is very good.
- The principal provides able leadership to the school and is well supported by a hard-working deputy principal.
- Analysis of questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicates that both parents and pupils have very positive attitudes towards the educational provision in the school.
- Significant improvements have been made to the school’s information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure and to the integration of ICT into teaching and learning.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board should consider appropriate protocols for communicating its work to parents and for greater involvement of parents in policy formation.
- More systematic school self-evaluation procedures and practices should be put in place.
- Greater cohesion and consistency is required in planning for pupils with special and additional educational needs and in recording their progress.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted, keeps careful records and has its accounts certified on an annual basis. The board’s success in upgrading the school’s infrastructure in recent years is a testament to the collective voluntary endeavour of the members. Another important facet of the board’s work in supporting the school is its careful consideration of policies and of their ratification. It is recommended that the board considers appropriate protocols for communicating its work to parents and for greater involvement of parents in policy formation.

- The principal deploys his considerable skills very well in the effective day-to-day management of the school. He maintains a primary focus on the holistic development of pupils, the maintenance of high standards of achievement and the purposeful cultivation of good relationships in all aspects of school life. The principal is solidly supported by a very capable deputy principal, with whom he shares the in-school management tasks.

- The school building and grounds are very well maintained and classrooms are supplied with a good range of modern teaching aids and resources. While infrastructural developments have been hampered somewhat by a lack of space the board has worked diligently to overcome this restraint. A playing field has been acquired and developed a short distance from the school.

- Pupil management is of a very high standard. During the evaluation pupils’ peer interactions and their relationships with their teachers were noted to be positive and respectful. Analysis of questionnaires administered to pupils indicates that pupils have very positive attitudes to school. All pupils surveyed feel safe in their classes and in the playground.

- While the school doesn’t have a parents’ association the parent body provides valuable support for the school in many ways. Parents support the school at sporting events, swimming classes, concerts, religious occasions and fundraising. Responses to parental questionnaires indicate that all parents feel that teaching is good, their children are doing well and that the school is well run. It is recommended that the board advises parents on an annual basis of its willingness to facilitate the formation of a parents’ association.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Much good work has been done on developing school policy at both organisational and curricular levels. The teachers work together and as part of a local school cluster in drafting policy documents. It is proposed to develop a school website in the current year and this initiative should provide a vehicle for greater dissemination of policies among parents.

- A culture of continuous reflection ensures that progress and standards are monitored. Recent good work carried out to review Mathematics, with the assistance of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), provides a useful template for similar work in other curricular areas. Standardised test results have been analysed on a whole school basis and a report made to the board. There is scope for greater analysis of the data and individual tracking of pupils’ progress should also be considered. The school’s strategic plan outlines recent developments and provides some direction for the immediate future. This plan should be shared with the board and parents.
The quality of classroom planning is good. The teachers plan conscientiously for their work. Records of monthly progress are maintained. These records should be kept in a central location and used for self-evaluation on a whole school basis.

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

The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. The pupils in their multi-grade classes respond very positively to effective management and stimulating, well-paced teaching. Due to the multi-grade composition of classes pupils are adept at working independently. Teachers use ICT effectively to engage pupils with their learning. Pupils’ work is presented very attractively and due care is taken with the development of handwriting skills. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are integrated effectively in mainstream classes.

Múintear an Ghaeilge go fuinniúil cumasach dúshlánanach agus sroichte caighdeán ard i measc na ndaltaí i bhfoighlaim na teanga. Cogaidh ar dharchumas tuisceana, saibhreas foclóra agus liofacht chainte fad is atá na daltaí ag fás agus ag forbairt. Cuirtear anam sa teagasc le rainn, dánta, amhráin agus ceol. Tugtar aird faoi leith don scribhneoireacht phearsanta sna hardranganna, áit a scriobhthar agus a thoilseart scéalta dea-chumtha i bhfoirm leabhair bheaga. B’fhiú anois machnamh ar thrial chaighdeánach a úsáid chun mondealú eolais a thabhairt sa bhfoirm leabhair bheaga.

Irish is taught in an energetic, capable and challenging manner and the pupils achieve a high standard in the learning of Irish. A high capacity for understanding, a richness of vocabulary and a fluency of speech is cultivated as pupils grow and develop. Teaching is enlivened through the use of rhymes, poems, songs and music. Pupils’ personal writing receives particular emphasis in the senior classes where well composed stories are written and published in booklet form. It is advised that consideration be now given to the use of a standardised test to provide analysis in the development of the specific language skills in Irish.

Provision for English is commendable. Pupils’ role as speakers and listeners is developed through frequent well-structured talk and discussion in English and in other curriculum areas. More frequent use of pair and group discussion would prove beneficial in developing confidence in oral communication. The development of phonic skills is given significant impetus, particularly in the infant and junior classes, through a well-planned and systematic approach. Reading skills are carefully taught, pupils are encouraged to read widely, and standardised test results indicate very good reading standards throughout the school. Writing, in various genres, is practised at all levels, and projects such as Write a Book are successfully used to celebrate pupils’ work.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Particular emphasis is placed on number facts, mathematical language, environment-based learning and the use of concrete materials to develop and internalise concepts. There is frequent revision and consolidation of concepts taught. Arising from a recent review of Mathematics, particular efforts are being made to extend pupils’ capacity to solve problems. Overall standards in national assessments undertaken are quite high. More detailed analysis of test outcomes should enable a more definite focus on any areas of weakness that emerge.
• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is of a good standard. A challenging and interesting programme of learning is presented to pupils. The principles of scientific method are carefully emphasised during the various hands-on activities. Subject specific terminology is carefully taught. When questioned about work previously completed, pupils were knowledgeable and forthcoming on the various concepts explored.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The learning support teacher and the resource teacher for pupils with special needs are based in and shared with neighbouring schools. During the evaluation a substitute teacher was employed in the learning support post. Commendable support is provided for pupils with special and additional learning needs, particularly in literacy and numeracy. An early intervention programme is in place to provide extra support in phonics and letter formation to junior infant pupils. Pupils in all settings are making good progress.

• While planning in the support settings is undertaken conscientiously by the teachers, there is need for greater consistency in the approaches adopted. There is a need for more specific learning targets in some instances, more frequent assessment and a more systematic recording of targets achieved. More cohesive links between class teachers, support teachers and parents is required.

• Effective home-school links are maintained through regular newsletters, yearly parent-teacher meetings and end-of-year school reports. The school has adopted an open-door policy in dealing with parents and there is frequent informal contact between parents and teachers.

• Pupils have many opportunities to participate in beneficial extra-curricular activities. These activities include quizzes, concerts, games, athletics, field trips and cultural outings. The services of an external Gaelic football coach are availed of on a seasonal basis.
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 the whole school community of Clohanbeg National School in Cree wish to extend a sincere thank you to the Department of Education and Skills Inspectors for the courtesy, constructive and professional manner in which they carried out the Whole School Evaluation.

The commitment, support and advice of the inspector throughout the entire W.S.E. process is very much appreciated and valued by the Board of Management and staff.

We are very pleased the WSE report affirms the positive work being done in our school by the staff, Board of Management, parents and pupils. It is a great encouragement to all involved.

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 of Clohanbeg NS welcomes the advice and any recommendations contained in the WSE report.

Following the receipt of the report the Board have decided to undertake the implementation of the main recommendations made, and are committed to doing this in the lifetime of the current Board.