Whole School Evaluation REPORT

Mallow No.1 National School
Shortcastle, Mallow,
Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 12004A

Date of inspection: 30 September 2010
1. Introduction

Mallow No.1 National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. It has three mainstream classroom teachers, a shared learning-support/resource teacher and a language-support teacher. The school caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class, representing diverse cultural backgrounds. In response to a considerable increase in enrolments, it was granted developing school status in 2008. This enabled the school to increase staff levels. Currently, there are fifty-five pupils on roll. Attendance levels are good and are monitored carefully. 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 Strengths and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The board of management discharges its duties effectively.
- The school building was recently extended and upgraded. This excellent work on behalf of the school community has ensured much improved facilities for teaching and learning.
- The principal leads the school capably. Under her leadership impressive work has been undertaken to create a positive climate for learning.
- The teachers are motivated and hard working. They successfully provide the pupils with a well-ordered stimulating learning environment.
- The standards of behaviour exhibited by the pupils are exemplary. Pupils exhibit pride in their work and are eager to display the learning they have mastered.
- Good quality work is undertaken in the teaching and learning of Social, Personal and Health Education. The provision of carefully planned lunch-time activities affords pupils valuable opportunities to develop key skills.
- The parents’ association and ancillary staff contribute extensively to the work of the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Greater use should be made of hands-on resources to facilitate the implementation of more active-learning methodologies and more structured play.
- More effective use should be made of data arising from pupils’ assessments and teachers’ monthly progress records to inform the systematic review of curricular policies and the provision of differentiated learning programmes.
- In the teaching of Irish, English and Mathematics it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the direct teaching of key skills in a targeted and differentiated manner.
- Further measures should be put in place to ensure that a staged approach to assessment and programme planning for pupils with special educational needs is implemented.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management discharges its duties effectively. Meetings are convened frequently. Minutes are maintained carefully and the accounts are certified. The board has discussed and ratified whole-school policies. To further develop the role of the board in overseeing and monitoring the provision of education it is recommended that curricular policies be reviewed in a more systematic manner. The board employs a secretary and special-needs assistant who contribute significantly to the school.

- The principal leads the school capably. Under her leadership impressive work has been undertaken to create a positive climate for learning in the school. She displays a high commitment to the further development of curricular leadership. She is supported by a motivated and hard-working staff. The teachers successfully provide the pupils with a well-ordered, stimulating learning environment.

- The staff members make effective use of all available accommodation. The board, in collaboration with staff and parents, recently extended and upgraded the premises. This excellent work has ensured much improved facilities for teaching and learning. At particular class levels there is an over-reliance on textbooks. Teachers are advised to extend the use of hands-on resources to facilitate the implementation of more active-learning methodologies and more structured play for learning in the early years.

- Based on evidence gathered during the evaluation, the behaviour of the pupils is exemplary. They exhibit pride in their work and are eager to display the learning they have mastered. An effective code of discipline is in place. The positive responses regarding school climate in the pupil and parent questionnaires issued as part of this evaluation support this finding.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good in that significant work has been undertaken to formulate, review and implement key organisational and curricular policies. To enhance the capacity of the school to engage in self-evaluation, the staff should make more effective use of data arising from pupils’ assessments and teachers’ monthly progress records to inform the review of curricular policies. Such a process should aim to lead to the regular formulation of specific action plans to be achieved within agreed time frames. In addition, there is need to put further measures in place to ensure that a staged approach to assessment and programme planning for pupils with special educational needs be implemented.

- All teachers provide long and short-term classroom planning and record the monthly progress of work. The considerable work and effort in evidence is acknowledged. Where planning is particularly effective suitable learning intentions in terms of the skills and concepts to be developed are outlined clearly. To promote further continuity and progression in the development of pupils’ learning it is recommended that this good practice be adopted by all teachers.

Child protection policy and procedures

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

- Léiríonn líon suntasach daltaí meon dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus is aoibhinn leo na scileanna teanga atá forbartha acu a thaispeáint. N uair a chonacthas samplai fónta de dhea-chleachtas i dtéagasc na Gaeilge cuireadh ar chumais na ndaltaí sprioctheanga oiriúnach a shealbhú ar bhonn cumarsáideach, idirghnúomhach. Bhí an sáechtleachtas seo a fhobartrí trí úsáid níos phléithe a bhaint as an gcur chuige cumarsáideach mar is léir go leagtar bheim rómhór ag rangleibhéal ar leith ar theagasc ranga. Luaitear go speisialta an tábhacht a bhaineann le difreálú sa chlárteagais a chur chun cinn a thuilleadh.

- A notable number of pupils demonstrate a great interest in learning Irish and are keen to display the language skills they have developed. Where good quality teaching and learning were observed, pupils were enabled to acquire a suitable target language input in a communicative, interactive manner. It is recommended that this excellent practice be extended through wider use of the communicative approach, as at some class levels an over-emphasis is placed on whole-class teaching. In particular there is need to place a greater emphasis on differentiating classroom programmes.

- In English, pupils’ are afforded many high-quality opportunities to develop their oral language skills. In the teaching of reading and writing the teachers have introduced a range of good approaches. Some pupils are avid readers and have developed a good standard of writing. At particular class levels there is scope for the development of pupils’ reading and independent writing skills. More emphasis on the direct teaching of key skills in a targeted and differentiated manner is necessary. Greater use of the language experience approach and of active-learning methodologies, particularly at the emergent reading stage, is advised.

- Examples of good practice in the teaching and learning of Mathematics were observed. These included due emphasis on the acquisition of mathematical language and carefully constructed opportunities for pupils to explore concepts. There is need to extend these good practices on a whole-school basis in order to promote further improvement in the quality of pupils’ learning experiences and outcomes. Specifically, it is recommended that teachers extend the use of concrete materials and interactive teaching and learning practices in order to provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their problem solving skills.

- Good quality work is undertaken in the teaching and learning of Social, Personal and Health Education. Teachers make use of a range of suitable resources to implement the programme and pupils demonstrate a keen understanding of the areas covered. The school has a healthy-lunch policy which is promoted effectively. The provision of carefully planned lunch-time activities, in conjunction with the involvement of the school in the Green-Schools programme, affords pupils valuable opportunities to develop key skills. The pupils’ learning is further enhanced through participation in weekly assembly, competitions, musical and sporting activities.

- The teachers make use of a range of suitable assessment approaches and the practice of administering standardised tests is well established. The results are recorded carefully but greater analysis of them is recommended, particularly in order to inform the provision of differentiated programmes at class and whole-school levels. Copybooks indicate that at particular class levels pupils are well-taught to present their work to a good standard,
in an age-appropriate manner, and their assignments are monitored carefully. It is recommended that this good practice be extended and that staff members consider the further development of assessment for learning as outlined in the guidelines published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The teachers have introduced innovative intervention strategies to provide good quality support for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. A number of well-structured teaching and learning sessions with high levels of focused pupil participation were observed. To enhance the quality of support it is recommended that individual pupils’ current level of performance and the targets to be achieved be recorded in more precise terms.

- The school encourages parents and supports them to take an active role in their children’s learning. The parents’ association contributes extensively to the work of the school. The responses from the questionnaires completed by parents indicated that the overwhelming majority of parents are happy with the school. The staff organises both class and one-to-one parent-teacher meetings. Parents receive written reports about their children’s progress. In the interest of further development, it is advised that staff give consideration to the use of the NCCA report card templates for reporting pupil progress and achievement.

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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

The Board of Management of Mallow (No.1) N.S., on behalf of the school community, would like to express our gratitude for the professional and courteous manner in which the Whole School Evaluation was carried out by the Department of Education and Skills inspector. We are pleased that the report affirms the positive work being done in the school and in particular the reference to the motivated and hard working staff who provide the pupils with a well-ordered stimulating learning environment.

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 working alongside the Principal and staff will facilitate the recommendations outlined in our Whole School Evaluation and will endeavour to implement them as effectively as possible.

- Action plans are being drawn up to facilitate the implementation of more active learning methodologies and more structured play.
- The principal and teaching staff have committed to more effective use of data arising from pupils’ assessments and teachers’ monthly records to inform that systematic review of curricular policies and the provision of differentiated learning programmes.
- The principal and teaching staff are currently undertaking a review process to ensure more emphasis will be placed on the direct teaching of key skills, also incorporating differentiated provision for pupils in the curricular areas of Irish, English and Mathematics.
- In the area of learning support/resource teaching, best practice in assessment and programme planning for pupils with special education needs is being implemented.

The community of Mallow (No.1) N.S. acknowledge the benefit of the Whole School Evaluation as part of our ongoing process of development in all areas within our aim to place the child as the centre of our collective endeavour.