Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Corballa National School
(via Ballina)
Co Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 12171T

Date of inspection: 28 September 2011
1. Introduction

Corballa National School is a five-teacher co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala in the parish of Castleconnor. The current enrolment of ninety-eight (forty-five girls, fifty-three boys) represents a steady increase in recent years. Pupils’ overall attendance levels are good.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama. 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

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<th>The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:</th>
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<td>• A very positive and supportive climate pervades the school community.</td>
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<td>• The board of management fulfills its functions very diligently and effectively.</td>
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<td>• The principal and staff demonstrate high levels of commitment, capability and effectiveness.</td>
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<td>• The parents’ association is very committed to and supportive of school activities.</td>
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<td>• Very high levels of satisfaction with the school overall are indicated by parents and pupils.</td>
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<td>• The school building, located in attractive and spacious grounds, is very well maintained.</td>
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<th>The following main recommendations are made:</th>
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<td>• To further school improvement and self-evaluation, the board of management should establish an action plan to determine priorities, targets and responsibilities.</td>
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<td>• Whole-school planning and recording approaches should be devised and implemented by staff.</td>
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<td>• The revision of post-holder duties and introduction of a class allocation policy would benefit pupils and teachers alike.</td>
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<td>• Activity-based, discovery learning and collaborative teaching approaches should be extended.</td>
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3. Quality of School Management

• The board is highly commended for its evident commitment to the school. The chairperson is a frequent visitor to the school and is supportive of school work. Members undertake various projects on an ongoing basis. The physical environment of the school
reflects the regular improvement and development of resources and infrastructure. However, the board remains concerned about the school perimeter wall and the lack of parking spaces. It is recommended that all pupils be afforded equal access to extra-curricular resources and provision.

- The principal and staff are a very diligent, collegial, hard-working team. The principal assiduously guides the work of the school and is well-supported by a committed in-school management team. The day-to-day functioning of the school is well managed. It is suggested that the duties ascribed to post-holders be amended on a regular basis in order to reflect the evolving needs of the school. The successful operation of a book rental scheme for pupils is commended.

- The sharing of good practice between teachers is commended. It is a valuable means of contributing to their respective continuing professional development. The introduction of a class allocation policy would provide all teachers with further opportunities to broaden their range of skills and competencies through teaching in different class settings.

- A strong community spirit is maintained through very good relationship and communication structures with parents and with the wider school community. The very active parents’ association is very supportive of the school’s work. Responses to questionnaires indicate that the school is viewed positively by parents and pupils alike.

- The spacious school grounds are attractive and very well maintained. Successful involvement with the Green Schools programme and the effective school garden project emphasise care for the environment.

- The contributions of the part-time secretary and the part-time caretaker significantly benefit the work of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of whole-school planning is highly commended. A range of organisational, administrative and curriculum plans has been collaboratively formulated. Although many policies have been approved and ratified by the board of management, it is suggested that a cyclical process for review and sanction be introduced.

- There is some evidence that the school engages informally in self-evaluation. Many elements of the school plan have been updated recently and discussions take place at board and staff meetings. To further enhance these processes, it is suggested that the school formally identify and target elements of its work that can be further improved in an action plan. The inclusion of specific targets, priorities, responsibilities and success criteria should be agreed.

- The quality of teachers’ individual planning is good and some excellent work is in evidence. It is advised that a whole-school approach be undertaken to provide a continuum of development for pupils and to further facilitate breadth and balance of curriculum delivery.

- 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

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the four subjects evaluated is of a good quality overall. Many classes comprised whole-class teaching but other well-structured lessons made provision for small group work and paired activities. Well-paced lessons were mostly informed by explicit, shared learning objectives. Effective use is made of ICT in some classes. As reflected in the pupils’ questionnaires, consideration should now be given to extending the provision for pupil differentiated learning through more activity-based, discovery learning and collaborative investigative activities.

- A variety of assessment modes is undertaken. The practice of analysing standardised tests is highly commended. These analyses are an effective means of tracking individual pupil progress and whole-school trends. The staff engages in informal discussions relating to curriculum implementation and the progress of pupils. The trends identified in assessment data and test analyses could be further used to support curriculum implementation and school self-evaluation. Further links with assessment for learning (AfL) approaches will consolidate this work. Consideration could also be given to enabling the pupils to engage in both peer and self-assessment.

- The quality of the teaching and learning of Irish is good and the teaching of Irish is undertaken diligently. Irish is used as a medium of communication outside the formal language lesson in many classes. Commendable emphasis is placed on developing pupils’ speaking skills and many of them are capable of structuring sentences and communicating accurately in the language. Regular reading opportunities are provided and pupils demonstrate good understanding of the reading material. Written work in Irish is good. It is recommended that further creative writing opportunities be provided.

- High quality teaching, learning and pupil achievement are in evidence in English. Pupils express their views competently and confidently. The effective use of poetry, class libraries and class novels and the variety of methodologies adopted encourage the pupils to engage well with, and respond to literature. All pupils report that they are doing well at reading. The pupils write in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. They are afforded opportunities to publish their writing in a variety of ICT applications. The further promotion of a process approach with drafting, re-drafting and editing is advised.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. This is evidenced through, for example, standardised test results. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the acquisition of number facts and on mental arithmetic. Lessons are generally well-structured and mathematical concepts are linked to the pupils’ everyday environment. Further provision of structured opportunities for collaborative group work, problem-solving and investigative approaches with the extended use of mathematical
equipment would greater facilitate individual differences in pupil ability, learning style and needs.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is good overall. Interest is stimulated in pupils who are encouraged to assume a variety of roles and characters. Some of the lessons observed were based on objectives from the drama curriculum. This is good practice that could be further developed across the school. Drama is also used effectively as a teaching methodology.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support provided for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. The learning support/resource teacher is shared with another local school. Individual education plans (IEPs) and individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) contain timed, measurable, realistic targets and are devised through a consultative process with parents and mainstream class teachers. Appropriate provision is made for early intervention and the staged approach, and due consideration is given to professional reports. The teacher employs a suitable range of diagnostic tests and incorporates both in-class support and withdrawal interventions. Her planning and record-keeping is exemplary and all work is tailored to the pupils’ individual needs.

- Both special needs assistants (SNA) make a valuable contribution to pupils’ learning under the guidance of class teachers. It is timely now to devise a policy in this regard.

- The teachers are clearly committed to the pastoral care, holistic development and academic learning of all pupils. A caring and mutually-respectful atmosphere is cultivated throughout the school. The pupils are commended for their good behaviour and for their generally positive attitudes towards learning.

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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 Corballa National School wishes to acknowledge the professional approach of the Inspector to her work during the WSE in Corballa N.S. The Board wishes to thank the Inspector for her courtesy to the pupils, staff, parents and Board of Management during the visit.

The Board is happy that the dedication and conscientiousness of all parties involved in the effective management of the school has been acknowledged and is also pleased that the high standard of teaching in Irish, English, Maths and Drama has been noted by the Inspector.

The Board note the key recommendations and will endeavour to address them.

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 commits to establishing an action plan to determine priorities, targets and responsibilities within our school over the coming years.
- The staff commit to devising and implementing whole school planning and recording approaches.
- We will continue to review post-holder duties and commit to introduce a class allocation policy.
- The use of activity-based, discovery learning and collaborative teaching methods will be reinforced and extended.