An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Pádraig
Currabaggan, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 12206M

Date of inspection: 9 February 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Scoil Naomh Pádraig, Currabaggan was undertaken in February 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Scoil Naomh Pádraig is a rural school located outside the village of Knockmore, eight kilometres from Ballina. Its catchment area is wide due to the amalgamation of schools in Carrowgarve and Pontoon in 1971. It caters for boys and girls from infants to sixth class. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala.

The following table provides an overview of the enrolment and staffing in the school at the time of the evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils enrolled in the school</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream classes in the school</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers on the school staff</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream class teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers working in support roles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs assistants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision

The school’s mission statement is published in the school plan. The school community aspires to ensure pupils have “achieved their potential in literacy and numeracy” on leaving the school and that they will “use these skills to pursue further learning and become active members for society”. A strong emphasis is also placed on teacher professional development.

1.2 Board of management

The quality of the board of management is very good. Regular meetings are held and minutes are taken. Members are very clear on their roles and responsibilities. They have availed of training. Accounts are maintained and are certified at the end of each year. The board ensures a very high standard of maintenance of the school building and grounds. The chairperson visits the school each week.

1.3 In-school management

The principal is hard working, organised and has created a shared vision for the school community. She promotes staff development and organises regular staff meetings where the role
of secretary and chairperson are rotated. The principal is currently working as a learning support teacher within the school. Plans are in place to replace her in this role to ensure the school fulfils the requirement of the Department of Education and Science circular 17/00.

The principal is supported by a very able deputy principal and two special duties teachers who undertake a broad range of duties. All members of the in-school management team have a contract with duties assigned in curricular, organisational and pastoral areas. They have regular team meetings.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community

Communication with the school community is managed very effectively. There are clear lines of communication between the board, staff, parents and the parents’ association. The school organises annual parent-teacher meetings as the main forum for discussing the progress of individual pupils. End of year written reports are also issued. The staff organises a presentation of the primary curriculum for parents at the beginning of the school year to ensure they are aware of the structure and methodologies in use for each subject. Such practice is praiseworthy. The staff is supported by a very dynamic parents’ association. Members of this group are very stimulated and interested in the education of their children and they support the school with all initiatives. They do very substantial fundraising for the school. They also work with other parents associations in the parish, which facilitates positive interactions between local schools. This initiative is commendable.

1.5 Management of pupils

The quality of pupil management is generally very good. The school has a very clear code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy which is shared with the parent body. During the course of the evaluation the majority of pupils presented themselves as happy, motivated learners. They interacted very appropriately with their teachers and peers. The staff should consider strategies for engaging pupils who display challenging behaviour.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning

The quality of the whole-school planning process is good. The staff plans on an ongoing basis and identifies key priorities for planning days and staff meetings. Each plan is based on a common framework. The quality of organisational policies is very good. They are relevant to the school’s context and provide practical information. The quality of curricular plans shows some scope for development. They are extensive documents which makes reading and review very time-consuming. Many of the successful approaches adopted in individual classrooms could be discussed at whole-school level and developed into whole-school practice. It is recommended that each curricular plan is condensed and reviewed with a view to documenting some of the very good practice observed across the school in certain subjects.

The quality of classroom planning is generally very good, with some exceptions. There is a need to ensure that all teachers’ planning is brought to a certain standard and is comprehensible. Schemes of work are submitted to the principal. In a majority of cases, the content of schemes is linked very effectively to the objectives of the Primary School Curriculum. It is recommended
that differentiated outcomes for individual pupils and different ability groups are stated clearly in each teacher’s short-term plans.

2.2 Child protection policy and procedures
Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Science Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Science, September 2001). Confirmation was also provided 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.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 Language

**Gaeilge**

Léann daltaí i ngach rang go muiníneach agus go tuisceannach. Sonraithearsaíochtaí agus go mbaineann ábhair clótheochtaí agus go mbaineann ábhair clótheochtaí agus i ngach seomra ranga. Baintear feidhm an-éifeachtach as leabhair bheaga leabharlainne agus as úrscéalta Gaeilge. Tá caighdeán na scribhneoireachta a charaighdeán fíor-ard chomh maith. Leagtar béim inmhailtaithe ag na hoidí a mhúineadh agus go mbaineann ábhair clótheochtaí agus go mbaineann ábhair clótheochtaí agus in each classroom. Small library books and Irish novels are used very effectively. The

**Irish**
Irish is taught very effectively. A very high standard of spoken Irish has been achieved by the teachers. Irish is used competently by a majority of teachers as the main language of the classroom. It can be heard spoken between teachers and pupils in the school yard at break times. An oral competition is organised in the yard on an ongoing basis which contributes to the natural use of Irish. A wide range of activities and resources is used to promote the language. The communicative approach is promoted to a very high standard. Teachers teach a broad vocabulary base to their pupils. The teachers who use Irish to teach other subjects, particularly Physical Education, deserve high praise. Pupils are able to answer and ask questions effectively. They can express themselves competently in different tenses. They have a positive attitude to the language.

Pupils in all classes read confidently and with understanding. Print-rich environments were noted in each classroom. Small library books and Irish novels are used very effectively. The
standard of Irish writing is very high also. A commendable emphasis is placed on pupils’ personal news and there is a clear link between the spoken themes and the written themes. The writing process is promoted in certain classes and pupils produce their own little books.

**English**

Good standards are achieved in most aspects of teaching and learning in English. The majority of teachers provide very good opportunities to the pupils to develop their oral language skills. It is commendable that the centrality of oral expression as the basis for all achievement in reading and writing is clearly understood by the teachers. Pupils demonstrate high levels of ability in talking about themselves and their interests. In most classes pupils can recite a selection of poetry fluently and with good expression.

Currently, the school uses a variety of strategies to teach phonics and word-attack skills. The school is advised to agree on the use of one phonic programme and to implement it incrementally. The school is also advised to focus on the development of phonological awareness amongst pupils to facilitate their mastery of reading skills. The school is well resourced with a good range of reading material and most pupils could speak enthusiastically about their favourite authors and genres. Pupil performance during the evaluation and recent standardised test results indicate that the majority of pupils are achieving quite well in reading. However, teachers are advised of the need to ensure that programmes of work are differentiated sufficiently to ensure that the learning needs of the pupils are addressed in the mainstream class.

Some very good work was observed in the teaching of writing. This good practice included the creation of pupils’ individual booklets, writing poetry and the display in most classes of high quality samples of pupils’ work. There is evidence that a variety of genres is taught and that pupils engage fully in the writing process. The teachers are commended for the high standards that are being achieved in writing.

**3.2 Mathematics**

The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Teachers generally use an effective variety of activities with an appropriate focus on the use of concrete materials and visual aids. A majority of teachers ensure that new material is linked to pupils’ current understanding and to the environment. A majority of teachers also emphasise the language of Mathematics effectively. Pupils display competence across all strands. They are interested in mathematical enquiry and their questions are welcomed by a majority of teachers. A commendable emphasis is placed on mental Mathematics throughout the school. It is recommended that the staff devise a whole-school approach to problem-solving in Mathematics and that they differentiate work for pupils of different levels of ability in a structured and coherent way.

**3.3 Drama**

All Drama lessons were conducted in the school hall which is a valuable resource for the delivery of this subject. Some very good practice was observed, including integration with literacy, pair work and group work and the development of pupils’ oral language skills. Drama games, discussion, mime, group work, circle work and role play were successfully used to stimulate interest and to engage the pupils fully. It is advised that all classes should devise and sign a Drama contract as is specified in the school plan and that this contract should be regularly revisited. Teachers are advised to focus on skill development in delivering the Drama curriculum and to provide as many opportunities as possible to stimulate pupils’ creative and problem-solving skills in Drama.
3.4 Assessment

Teacher observation, teacher-devised tests and the regular monitoring of pupils’ written work are some of the assessment modes used throughout the school. The Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is administered to pupils in senior infants. In addition, standardised testing is carried out annually on pupils from first to sixth classes inclusive in English and Mathematics. Standardised test results are analysed and targets for improvement are identified. Test results are carefully recorded and centrally maintained. A more systematic approach to the analysis of assessment results is recommended, with a view to ensuring that teaching is adapted to the range of identified strengths and learning needs. It is recommended that a system be introduced to track the progress of individual pupils as they progress through the school.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs

The school has a special education team which comprises a full-time learning support teacher, and two part-time resource teachers. All teachers are hardworking. They have established very good relationships with their pupils and have ensured a very positive attitude to pupils with special educational needs exists among the staff. All settings are very well resourced. Members of the special education team have availed of significant professional development and are commended for their commitment to the improvement of services. However, the quality of provision varies between the support settings with some provision showing significant scope for development.

Teachers prepare individual education plans for each child in receipt of support and these are shared with parents. It is essential that all education plans are based on the recommendations in reports from other professionals where available. It is further recommended that teachers are judicious about the use of resources and methodologies. While a start has been made towards the provision of in-class support, there is significant scope for development in this area. The school is advised to contact the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to further the special needs provision in the school.

4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups

There are currently no other supports required for pupils in the school.

5. CONCLUSION

The school has strengths in the following areas.

- The board of management is efficient and hardworking.
- The parents’ association provides invaluable support to the school.
- The teachers are dedicated and conscientious in their duties, they employ a wide range of resources and methodologies in their teaching.
- The quality of Irish is of an exceptionally high standard.
- Teachers place a commendable emphasis on oral language development in English.
• The school has established very effective channels of communication with the parent body.
• A commendable emphasis is placed on the development of mental Mathematics throughout the school.

The following key recommendations are made in order to further improve the quality of education provided by the school.

• It is recommended that the post of full-time learning-support teacher is taken up by a member of the teaching staff in September 2010 to ensure the principal has mainstream class duties, in line with circular 17/00.
• It is recommended that teachers use assessment data to differentiate work for individuals and groups of different ability.
• It is recommended that the services of Special Education Support Service (SESS) are sought to further the provision of special education within the school.
• It is recommended that curricular plans are reviewed with a view to condensing the current plans, and documenting the successful practices in different curricular areas as observed in individual classrooms.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.
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 thanks the inspection team for the courteous and professional way the evaluation was handled. We are delighted with the many positive comments in the report, especially those relating to the co-operation and unity among the school community - specifically the parents, the teachers and the Board of Management.

We are happy that the dedication and conscientiousness of the teachers has been acknowledged. We are further pleased that the quality of the teaching of Irish is an exceptionally high standard; that the standards of the teaching of both English and Mathematics are high; that a strong emphasis is placed on Teacher Professional Development. We intend to continue with our high standards into the future. We would like to endorse all these and congratulate the children, their parents and the staff.

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 Principal has commenced mainstream class duties.
• The teachers will seek professional development in the area of differentiation if and when such is available in the local Education Centre.
• The SESS have been contacted to seek professional development in Special Education in-class-support systems.
• A review of curricular policies will be carried out.