Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Shinrone Mixed National School
Shinrone, Birr, Co. Offaly
Uimhir rolla: 12343W

Date of inspection: 15 December 2010
1. Introduction

Shinrone Mixed National School is a five-teacher co-educational school situated in the village of Shinrone near Birr in County Offaly. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. It seeks to create a caring Christian atmosphere where children and adults will feel loved and cherished and aims to provide a holistic education where pupils will be enabled to reach their full potential. The school caters for 132 pupils and enrolment patterns are stable. Pupil attendance is generally very good. The school receives additional resources under the Rural band of DEIS, an initiative of the Department of Education and Skills for schools serving areas of educational disadvantage. 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 works collaboratively and effectively in managing the school and it has established the school as a central focus within the local community.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is of a high standard.
- The teachers work diligently and cooperatively to provide a broad and balanced programme of learning.
- Baseline assessment data is used effectively to provide suitable supports for pupils with special educational needs and the whole-school approach to literacy is commended.
- The school provides a well-ordered, happy and safe learning environment for the pupils.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board’s annual account of income and expenditure should be made available to the school community.
- To complement the effective use of ICT by teachers, pupils should be afforded regular opportunities to use ICT in the classroom.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and has developed effective mechanisms to facilitate its engagement with planning and policy issues. Members demonstrate a very good understanding of the board’s statutory obligations and the chairperson collaborates regularly with the principal. The board has recently overseen the expansion and upgrading of the school facility. Careful financial records are maintained and the account of the board’s income and expenditure is audited annually. It is recommended that this account be made available to the school community in line with

- The quality of in-school management is very good. The principal works closely with the deputy principal and special duties teacher to manage the day-to-day running of the school in an efficient and effective manner. The leadership style of the principal fosters a culture of collaborative decision-making and all teachers are enabled to take on a leadership role. It is suggested that a formal system should be adopted for reporting to the board of management on the considerable work of the in-school management team.

- Both material and human resources are managed well. Overall, the school has a very good supply of material resources to support teaching and learning. Some additional materials could be provided to support mathematics teaching. Considerable investment has been made in information and communication technology (ICT) and these resources are used by teachers as a creative and effective pedagogical tool in all classrooms. It is suggested that a whole-school approach to the use of ICT by pupils should now be adopted. Whole-staff development is supported by the board of management and the teachers are commended for the manner in which they share their skills and knowledge arising from their participation in continuous professional development activities. Ancillary staff members work diligently to support the work of the school.

- The Parents’ Association, which is affiliated to the National Parents’ Council, provides valuable and generous support to the school. A variety of useful strategies is used to foster communication between parents and the school and an agreed system of reporting between the board and the Parents’ Association has recently been put in place.

- The management of pupils is highly commended and relationships in evidence between pupils and teachers during the evaluation were respectful, courteous, warm and friendly.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The process of school development planning is well embedded and there is a cyclical and collaborative approach to school self-evaluation and review. The DEIS three year plan for the school sets out priority areas for development and relevant interventions and strategies have been identified based on available data. Staff members are familiar with the purpose of these interventions and there is a clear timeline for the evaluation of their impact. Whole-school plans have been developed in organisational and curriculum areas. The organisational plans guide the work of the school in a clear and structured manner. A few of the curriculum plans would benefit from more specific guidelines on the content to be taught at various class levels. Overall, the school plan makes a positive impact on the work of the school.

- All teachers prepare comprehensive written planning. These plans are closely aligned to the structure and content of the primary school curriculum. Teachers make provision for the use of a range of suitable approaches and resources. All teachers are cognisant of the need to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils, and individual pupil abilities are carefully considered. A monthly record of progress is maintained 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

- Tá Gaeilge mhaith ag na hoidí sa scoil seo agus baineann siad feidhm éifeachtach as an
gcúr chugige cumarsáide chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Baineann dea-éagsúlaacht agus
taitneamh le raon na straitéise a úsáidtear chun na ceithre scil teanga a fhórbaire. Léiríonn
na daltaí dea-thuisceint ar a bhuflu déanta agus is féidir leo cumarsáid shimplí ó bhéal agus
i scribhinn a dhuanaí bunaíthe ar thopai ciálírith. B'fhíú anois feidhmiú ar bhonn uile
scoile chun réimsse na bhfothoimhneadh a leagan a leathnú agus clár gramadaí a aontú don scoil. Ba thairbheach freisin a thuilleadh a leagan ar an
scribhneoireacht phearsanta.

- The teachers have good Irish in this school and effective use is made of the
communicative approach to teach the language. The range of strategies used to teach
the four language skills are varied and enjoyable. The pupils display good understanding
of the work covered and they can converse and write simply about particular topics. It
would be of value now to work on a whole-school basis to broaden the range of subtopics
under the main language themes and to agree a grammar programme for the school. It
would also be of benefit to place more emphasis on personal writing.

- The whole-school approach to enhancing literacy clearly underpins the practice in each
classroom in relation to the teaching of English. The development of reading and writing
skills is monitored very carefully. There is good variety in the set writing tasks and the
school participates in a number of national initiatives to engage the pupils purposefully in
the writing process. In seeking to enhance literacy standards still further, the school
should endeavour to increase the percentage of very able readers now in the school.

- Standardised assessment results are used very effectively to plan for teaching and
learning in Mathematics. Some very good practice was observed in the use of concrete
materials, correction of pupil work and differentiation of programme content. At some
class levels, the learning environment could be more mathematics-rich, and there could
be a greater focus on oral maths strategies and error analysis in samples of pupil work.

- Effective and judicious use is made of a wide range of stimulating resources and teaching
methodologies to develop pupil knowledge in History and to teach the skills of working as
an historian. The overall standard of teaching and learning in History is very good.

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Class
teachers and support teachers collaborate effectively to organise whole class instruction,
small group activities and individual pupil support, as appropriate. A broad range of
useful resource materials is used to support teaching and learning and a suitable blend of
teaching methodologies is used to very good effect to enable pupils achieve standards
commensurate with their age and ability.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school is commended for the careful consideration given to the type and range of
supports provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). There is close
collaboration between the SEN team and mainstream class teachers. A cross-curricular
approach is taken and significant efforts are made to provide an integrated learning experience for pupils. The quality of teaching and interventions observed for pupils in the SEN setting was very good. Appropriate methodologies were used and differentiated learning experiences were provided in line with pupil ability.

- The progression of pupils with SEN is closely monitored and individual education plans are drawn up, as appropriate. The plans would benefit from greater clarity in the statement of targets and pupil attainment of targets should be recorded.

- The school seeks to combat disadvantage and to strengthen home-school partnerships through its home-school-community liaison (HSCL) programme. The DEIS action plan incorporates a range of suitable strategies and overall targets are set at whole-school level. It is suggested that specific targets should be set to improve the attendance of at-risk pupils identified under the school’s action plan and there should be a formal system for reporting on the operation of the HSCL programme to the board of management.
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, on its own behalf and on behalf of the staff and school community would like to thank the inspectors for their professionalism and courtesy shown during the WSE in December 2010. We are pleased with the strengths identified and welcome the recommendations made.

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 welcome the recommendations and suggestions made and have begun the process of implementing them.