Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Craggagh NS,
Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 12467R

Date of inspection: 13 December 2010
1. Introduction

Craggagh national school is a rural three teacher school situated between Balla and Kiltimagh in East Mayo. The school, which is under the patronage of the Bishop of Achonry, has experienced significant staff changes in recent times. The building, which dates from 1884, is well maintained and attractively presented. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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 staff are commended for the very attractive and well maintained school building and grounds.
- The staff is very committed and hard working, led by an enthusiastic and talented principal.
- The pupils are very courteous and are highly engaged with their learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good.
- The quality of pupils’ spoken Irish is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning in History is of a very high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board is advised to seek assistance from the Department of Education and Skills to provide additional ancillary accommodation for the school.
- Support should be sought from the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to ensure the best possible service is provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- An agreed template for monthly progress records should be devised to assist in developing a culture of school self-evaluation.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is to be commended for its high level of engagement with the work of the school and for the support it provides to the staff. The board is advised to review its current financial arrangements and to ensure that accounts are certified annually, as is required by the Education Act (1998).

- The newly appointed school principal is highly skilled, enthusiastic and very professional is his approach to his role as leader within the school community. He is very ably supported by his deputy principal who demonstrates a very high level of commitment to the school and its pupils.
• The school building is very well maintained and attractively presented but it lacks facilities such as a principal’s office or storage space. The current staff room is very cramped. Additional accommodation is required. The board is advised to make an application to the Department of Education and Skills in this regard.

• The management of pupils in this school is very good. Pupils are eager to participate in their lessons and are polite and pleasant in their interactions with each other and with adults. Their responses in the pupil questionnaires indicate a very high level of pupil satisfaction.

• Craggagh NS has a very good reputation in the community as is evidenced by responses in the parental questionnaires. All respondents agreed that teaching is good in the school. A very attractive newsletter is published by the school to inform parents of events and a school website is currently being developed.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of the school planning process is good. Policies are drafted and circulated to parents who are invited to contribute their views. Many of the curricular policies are very detailed and specific to the needs of the school. Classroom planning is of a high standard.

• The school has recently begun to engage in the process of school self-evaluation. Analysis of test results in literacy and numeracy on a whole school basis has been undertaken. This good work is highly commended. It is advised that an agreed template for monthly progress records be devised and that these records be used to provide the staff with the necessary information to engage in bringing about school improvement.

• 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

• This is a good school with very high levels of teaching, learning and pupil achievement overall. Very effective use is made of music, games and technology to provide stimulating and worthwhile lessons. All pupils report that they find their lessons interesting and almost all report that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Classroom teachers are diligent in the preparation of their lessons and a strong work ethic is in evidence. The school has begun the process of reducing its reliance on workbooks. This good work is commended.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. All teachers speak Irish fluently and accurately. Songs, poems and drama are used to good effect throughout the school to ensure that pupils develop both a love of the language and core vocabulary. It is advised that formal reading and writing in Irish is not begun until second class. Senior pupils demonstrate proficient communication skills and some of these
pupils can speak at length on different themes. It is advised that pupils be given more opportunities to write independently in Irish.

- Tá cáilíocht múinte, foghlama, agus caighdeán na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith. Labhraíonn gach oide Gaeilge go cruinn liofa. Úsáidtear amhráin, dánta, agus dráma go héifeachtach chun a dheimhniú go bhforbraíonn na daltaí grá don teanga agus foclóir riachtanach. Moltar gan léitheoireacht ná scríbhneoireacht foirmiúil a thosú roimh rang a dó. Taisteann na daltaí sinsearacha scileanna cum arsáidí inniúla agus is féidir le cuid acu tábhairt faoi théama éagsúla go hábha. Moltar níos mó deiseanna a sholáthair do na daltaí scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách a dhéanamh.

- Very effective teaching strategies are used in the teaching of English and very good standards of literacy are achieved by the majority of the pupils. A very good focus on oral language development with a clever emphasis on thematic approaches ensures that pupils can speak confidently and fluently on a wide range of topics. Reading for pleasure is encouraged and pupils speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their favourite authors. Some very good samples of pupils' written work were observed.

- Good standards are achieved in teaching and learning in Mathematics. Effective use is made of concrete materials, technology and the local environment to ensure that lessons in Mathematics are both enjoyable and useful. Games are used very effectively in some classes to ensure that pupils achieve very good mastery of number facts. It is advised that the staff devise a whole school approach to problem solving in Mathematics.

- Very high standards of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History were observed. Very good use was made of artefacts, timelines, local census data and talk and discussion to enable pupils to develop appropriate historical skills. Pupils’ questions were welcomed and pupils were encouraged to develop a critical approach to interpreting data. Very high levels of engagement with History lessons and the effective development of higher order thinking skills were observed.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school which welcomes pupils with differing needs and resources to meet those needs are provided. There is significant scope for development in the current approach to resource teaching. While individual education plans have been drawn up they do not reflect individual needs nor are they sufficiently based on the full range of specialist reports available.

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with SEN shows significant scope for development. An appropriate learning environment for these pupils has not been created. In-class support for pupils with SEN consists of physical education lessons. There is no provision made for support in numeracy for these pupils and progress records indicate that SEN pupils engage in completing classroom texts during resource lessons. There is an urgent need for review of the current provision for pupils with SEN. The school is advised to seek support from the SESS in this regard.

- At the time of the evaluation the learning support teacher had just retired. A substitute teacher provided good quality written preparation and individual pupil profiles. Appropriate structured activities to develop early literacy skills were observed. The school is advised to develop in-class approaches to meet pupils’ learning needs.

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