Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Cloughduv National School
Cloughduv, Crookstown, County Cork
Uimhír rolla: 13234W

Date of inspection: 12 November 2010
1. Introduction

Cloughduv National School is a co-educational, rural school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross, in the Parish of Kilmurray. The school was built in 1995 to cater for four classes. In recent years, due to increased enrolment, a number of temporary classrooms have been acquired. Enrolment now stands at 146 pupils. 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 is committed and effective.
- The staff is highly motivated and has a broad range of curricular expertise.
- The school engages in ongoing self evaluation which informs policy review and implementation.
- The principal actively encourages and promotes leadership development throughout the school.
- The school has a very active parents' association.
- Pupils are well behaved and engage enthusiastically in their work.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Moltar forbairt bhreise a dhéanamh ar an gcur chuíge cumarsáide i múineadh na Gaeilge agus ar an scríbhneoireacht cruthaitheach ar bhonn scoile-uile. (It is recommended that a communicative approach to the teaching of Irish and the development of pupils’ creative writing skills be further developed on a whole-school basis)

- The number of pupils in individual classes should be reviewed to ensure compliance with Department Circular 21/2010 Regulations governing the appointment and retention of teachers in Primary Schools for the school year 2010/2011.

- It is recommended that there be a greater balance between whole-class and focussed group teaching in the multi-class context.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management discharges its duties effectively. Meetings are convened each term and the chairperson visits the school on a regular basis. Minutes are maintained carefully and accounts are certified. The board is proactively dealing with issues around school accommodation and it has applied to the Department for funding to provide necessary additional accommodation. The board is actively involved in policy formulation and policies are regularly reviewed and ratified.

- The principal’s inclusive and democratic leadership style is a key strength in the school. He has successfully put organisational structures in place to facilitate the development of
leadership throughout the school. The duties allocated to the in-school management team are clearly outlined. The members of the teaching staff are diligent and have gained expertise in a wide range of curricular and administrative areas. It is evident that there are high levels of collaboration between staff members and that these contribute strongly to the success of the school. The school has a capable and committed staff that has high expectations for pupils’ learning.

- There is effective management of resources in the school. The board, with the support of Departmental grants, has invested in a wide range of resources, which are appropriately employed to support pupils’ active engagement in learning across all curricular areas. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are judiciously used as teaching and learning tools.

- The school employs ancillary staff who carry out their duties diligently.

- The school has a very active parents’ association which supports the work of the school. Parents’ representatives stated that they are happy with the education provision in the school. Results of parent questionnaires concur with the view expressed by the parents’ association.

- The staff is committed to promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. Pupils are courteous, co-operate willingly with teachers during lessons and contribute positively to the quality of school life. The school has a ratified code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy which are implemented throughout the school. Pupils indicated through their responses to questionnaires that they consider that the school provides a safe environment for all.

- Class sizes vary, with the largest class almost twice the size of the smallest. Even though various strategies have been implemented appropriately to support pupils in the larger classes, the size of classes should be reviewed to ensure compliance with Circular 21/2010 Regulations governing the appointment and retention of teachers in Primary Schools for the school year 2010/2011.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A broad range of curricular and administrative policies has been devised. Curricular plans are based on the strand and strand units of the curriculum. Staff participate in ongoing review of policies to address the evolving needs of the school. The existing enrolment policy should be reviewed to ensure it complies fully with current legislation. The school’s health and safety policy is currently under review with assistance from external professionals.

- The school engages in ongoing self-evaluation which appropriately informs policy review and implementation.

- All teachers provide long-term and short-term classroom planning. A common short-term planning template has been recently introduced. Most schemes of work are comprehensive and informative. It is recommended that this good practice be extended throughout the school to further promote continuity and progression of learning. Monthly progress records are carefully maintained and stored centrally. The use of these records would further enhance the school’s self-evaluation process.
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

- Léiritear dearadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Baintear leas fónta as rannta, dánta agus amhrán bun éisteacht agus chun Gaeilge labhartha na ndaltaí a chur chun cinn. Cé go bhfuil foclóir leathan ag daltaí moltar, áfach, an cur chuige cumarsáide a fhobairt chun scileanna cumarsáide a theireadh. Léann daltaí le brí agus le tuiscint ach b’fhéidir go mór réimse níos leithne téacsanna a chur ar fáil dóibh. Cé go ndéantar roinnt scribhneoireachta cruthaitheach moltar anois, áfach, an cruthaíteachas a thabhairt do dhaltaí ar bhonn níos rialta. Is rang-théagasc don chuid is mó a chlachtadh. B’fhéidir réimse níos leithne modhanna a chleachtadh chun chur le éispéireas foghlaíonna na ndaltaí.

A positive attitude to Irish is evident in the school. Constructive use is made of rhymes, poems and songs in promoting speaking and listening skills in Irish. Although pupils have a wide vocabulary it is recommended that a communicative approach be developed to enhance conversational skills. Pupils read with fluency and understanding. However, it would be beneficial if a wider range of reading materials was available. Although some creative writing exercises are engaged in it is now recommended that these opportunities be extended to pupils on a more regular basis. Whole class teaching is the main methodology used. It would benefit pupils’ learning if a wider range of teaching methodologies was employed.

- The overall quality of the provision in English is very good. A variety of effective approaches are used to develop pupils’ oral language skills. The practice of encouraging pupils to research topics and present their findings greatly enhances their learning. Many pupils participate eagerly in oral interaction, speak with confidence and attain good standards in reading. At a variety of class levels pupils read a broad range of carefully chosen differentiated reading material and good routines are in place to promote reading. To further cater for pupils’ individual differences and promote more sustained pupil-teacher interaction, it is recommended that the use of group and paired work be extended. A high standard in presentation of written work is evident. As pupils progress through the school they are systematically taught to master a good cursive style of handwriting. Pupils’ independent writing is promoted effectively at a number of class levels and high quality samples of their work were observed. It is recommended that this good practice be adopted at all class levels and that through the writing process pupils’ language be further extended and enriched.

- The quality of teaching in Mathematics is good. Lessons are structured and developed in an effective manner and pupils’ application to tasks is managed skilfully. Classrooms are well resourced and early mathematical activities are effectively promoted. Pupils display competent skills in a broad range of strands. Calculators are used appropriately by pupils from fourth class to further develop understanding and skills. Appropriate problem-solving skills are evident throughout the school. Pupils’ written work is neatly presented. Records show that their attainment in standardised tests is good.
• Good quality work is undertaken in the teaching and learning of Geography. Purposeful, whole-class teaching was observed. Many teachers have developed an effective style of questioning which promotes the development of pupils' thinking skills. There is evidence of some use of active-learning methodologies, the extension of which would further enhance the development of pupils' geographical skills. The school enjoys considerable success in promoting environmental awareness and care. Staff and parents have successfully developed a school garden thereby enabling pupils engage in outdoor gardening activities. Pupils are afforded excellent opportunities to engage in well-structured fieldwork in the locality. It is evident that at a variety of class levels they engage in high-quality project work.

• Overall the quality of teaching and learning in the school is high. A variety of methodologies is employed to mediate the curriculum effectively

• In line with school policy teachers deploy a broad range of formal and informal assessment approaches. Many well-marked copybooks were observed and where particularly effective marking was noted, pupils were given clear and constructive feedback for improvement. The school maintains careful records of pupils’ progress. Parents are provided with informative written records of their children’s progress. It is recommended that staff consider the further development of assessment for learning as outlined in Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, guidelines issued by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

• Overall the quality of support for pupils is of a high standard. Planning systems are well established in respect of pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) and pupils’ profiles are appropriately formulated in consultation with class teachers and parents. Lessons are suitably structured and a range of teaching resources, including ICT is utilised effectively. Pupils engage positively in learning activities. Progress is recorded using precise statements.

• Support for pupils is mostly provided on a withdrawal basis. The very good work in the development of in-class support is acknowledged. To further enhance provision it is advised that differentiated teaching methods and more focussed group work be developed within mainstream classes.

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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

Staff Response: The staff of Cloughduv National School wish to acknowledge the work of the Inspectorate during the recent Whole School Evaluation. We accept their recommendations and we have commenced a process of implementation.

B.O.M. Response: The Board of Management would like to point out that a “new” four classroom school was built in 1995 to cater for 98 pupils. Due to increased enrolment the number of pupils now stands at 146. To cater for these extra pupils there are three portacabins on site. The B.O.M. is very pleased with the report and will take on board all comments and recommendations.