Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Holy Family Primary School
Glenbrien, Enniscorthy, County Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 13299E

Date of inspection: 22 September 2011
1. Introduction

Holy Family Primary School, Glenbrien, Enniscorthy is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are fifty-eight pupils enrolled and attendance levels are very good. The board of management 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:

- Holy Family Primary School is characterised by its positive and friendly school climate.
- The school building and grounds provide a stimulating learning environment.
- The school is welcoming of parents. The parents’ association, and parents generally, support the work of the school.
- The management of pupils is praiseworthy.
- In English, almost all pupils demonstrate commendable reading standards.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The principal’s role as curriculum leader, in particular the leadership of improvements in teaching and learning, requires development.
- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation should be enhanced, including the active involvement of the board of management and parents.
- Sa Ghaeilge, moltar cumas labhartha na ndaltaí a chur chuig an bhonn níos córasaí tríd an scoil. The pupils’ spoken competence in the Irish language should be developed more systematically through the school.
- In English, the pupils should experience regular opportunities to write in range of genres and to edit and publish their work.
- Whole-school agreement should be reached to ensure the implementation of a broad, balanced and indepth history programme, including due attention to local history.
- Current provision and practice for pupils with special educational needs should be reviewed and developed.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is dedicated to supporting the work of the school. It successfully ensures the upkeep of the building and grounds and the provision of teaching and learning resources. As a means of developing its role, it is recommended that the board address teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters on a regular basis and communicate appropriately with the broader parent community regarding its work. While it is noted that the board issues an annual statement of its financial accounts to parents, it is advised that all such accounts operate fully under the auspices of the board and be certified externally on an annual basis. In order to ensure compliance with pertinent legislation and national guidelines, it is further advised that the enrolment policy, code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy be reviewed.

- The principal displays commitment to the work of the school and contributes to the cultivation of its positive school climate. Administrative tasks are completed appropriately and most parents consider that the school is well run. Nonetheless, the principal’s role as curriculum leader, in particular the leadership of improvements in teaching and learning, requires development. It is recommended that the principal ensure whole-staff discussion of classroom practice, the sharing of existing good practice and the schoolwide implementation of agreed innovations in teaching and learning. The principal is assisted by the special-duties teacher who fulfils assigned duties competently.

- The school building and grounds provide a stimulating learning environment. In the main, teaching and learning resources, including ICT, are used well. The influence of textbooks and workbooks on curriculum delivery, however, should be examined on a whole-school basis.

- In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents report that the school is welcoming of them. Parents are kept well informed regarding school activities and the proposed introduction of a school blog is welcomed. The parents’ association, and parents generally, support the work of the school. The parents’ association’s initiation of a range of projects and their effective communication with the wider parent community are laudable.

- The management of pupils is praiseworthy and most parents report that discipline is good. In the pupil questionnaires, a majority of pupils confirmed that they like coming to school, with almost all reporting that they get on well with the other children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- There is scope for development in the quality of school planning and school self-evaluation. It is recommended that individual curriculum plans clearly address the particular circumstances of the school and the specific teaching and learning approaches to be used. It is advised that school self-evaluation measures be implemented consistently and that identified priority areas be addressed through action planning. It is further advised that the board of management take a more active role in policy development, including formal consideration and ratification, and that the involvement of parents be facilitated.

- All mainstream class teachers engage in long-term and short-term planning and present monthly progress records. Long-term planning is of a good quality overall.

- While at the time of the evaluation a child protection policy had been prepared, the board of management had not formally adopted the Child Protection Guidelines for Primary
Schools (Department of Education and Science, September 2001), in compliance with Department of Education and Science Primary Circular 0061/2006. The board should ensure that the aforementioned guidelines are formally adopted; that its child protection policy is formally ratified; and that these procedures are brought to the attention of management and parents. A copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff) and 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and achievement being experienced by the majority of pupils is good. Where effective practice is in evidence, the teachers draw on a range of suitable teaching and learning approaches and lessons are structured to match the pupils’ differing abilities. In the questionnaires, a majority of parents agreed that teaching is good, with almost all pupils reporting that their lessons are interesting. In a majority of classrooms, commendable efforts are made to assess individual pupils’ progress and to use assessment outcomes to inform future teaching. It is recommended that established good practices in teaching, learning, assessment and achievement be extended to all class settings.

- Ar an iomlán, tá gnéithe le forbairt i gcáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. Cé go mbaineann formhór na n-oidí úsáid as raon straitéisí oiriúnacha le linn an teagaisc, labhraionn cuid mhaith de na daltaí le haespa muiníní agus liofacht. Moltar pleán cinnte uile-scoil don Ghaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm, aird a dhiriú ar struchtúr na gcceachtanna agus ábhar cinnte idir fhoclóir, fhráisí agus struchtúr a cheiliúradh go rianúil. I dtromlach na ranganna, aithrisíonn na daltaí cnuaíochta breá rann agus amhráin go líofa. Cé go léann formhór na ndaltaí sna hardranganna le liofacht chreidiúnaí, moltar go látair aird a dhiriú ar tús na léitheoireachta sna meánranganna agus gnóthachtáil a mhúineadh ar bhonn níos córasaí. Sna ranganna sinsearacha, tá túis maith curtha le cumas scríbhneoireachta neamhspleácha a chur chun cinn.

In the main, there is scope for development in the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish. While a majority of teachers draw on a range of suitable strategies in their teaching, a significant number of pupils lack appropriate confidence and fluency when speaking. It is recommended that a definitive whole-school plan for Irish be implemented, that lessons be structured appropriately and that definitive vocabulary, phrases and language inputs be practised consistently. In a majority of classes, the pupils recite a good variety of poems and songs fluently. While a majority of pupils in senior classes read with praiseworthy fluency, increased attention to early reading and the more systematic teaching of reading skills in middle classes are strongly advised. Good work has commenced on the promotion of independent writing skills in the senior classes.

- In general, teaching and learning of English is competent and the pupils express themselves well. Almost all pupils demonstrate commendable reading standards, with most reporting that they think they are doing well at reading. In promoting reading competence further, the school is advised to ensure that the pupils are exposed to a wider range of suitable children's literature. While the pupils’ functional writing skills are promoted suitably, the development of their independent writing skills requires considerable improvement. It is recommended that they experience frequent opportunities to write in a range of genres and to edit and publish their work.
• The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Lessons, in general, are well designed and implemented. Most pupils demonstrate good understanding of work previously completed and report that they think they are doing well at Maths. In implementing the mathematics programme, the school is advised to pay additional attention to the reinforcement of oral and written computation skills and the promotion of collaborative problem-solving skills.

• Much effective practice was in evidence in the teaching of History, including the purposeful use of artefacts and well-designed opportunities to work as historians. Nonetheless, interaction with the pupils confirmed variable knowledge and understanding of topics previously addressed. In order to ensure the implementation of a sufficiently broad and balanced programme, it is recommended that agreement be reached regarding the cyclical implementation of the various strand units, that topics be addressed at an in-depth level and that a whole-school approach to local history be implemented.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Presently, learning support/resource teaching (LS/RT) provides for pupils with special educational needs on a withdrawal basis and for parallel teaching of English and Mathematics. It is recommended that the organisation of provision be reviewed to ensure provision for all pupils with SEN, in tandem with prevention and team-teaching interventions.

• Current provision is characterised by positive teacher/pupil interactions, the building of pupils’ self-esteem and good pupil progress in completing assigned tasks. In order to improve the quality of SEN provision, a number of areas require development. A wide range of diagnostic tools should be used; the individual education plan format should be revised; teaching and learning activities should respond consistently to pupils’ assessed learning needs; and pupil progress should be monitored and recorded systematically.

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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

The Board of Management of Holy Family PS Glenbrien, welcomes and lauds the comprehensive and detailed report and is happy that the diligence and dedication of the Board, the principal and staff to the school and its pupils is recognised.

The school community is very appreciative of the report’s comments on the school’s positive and friendly climate and its stimulating learning environment.

The Board also notes the favourable comments on the commitment and initiatives of the Parents’ Association.

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 working in conjunction with the principal and the staff will facilitate the recommendations and findings in the WSE and will endeavour to implement them as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Board has already ratified and updated the Child Protection, Admission and Code of Discipline Policies.

The Board notes the recommendations and advice with regard to the curricular areas mentioned in the report and plans are in progress to review and implement these.

Action Plans have been devised to implement the school’s short and long term curricular and organizational plans and policies.

Tá timpeallacht Gaelach a chruthú trí thaispeantas tarraingeach prionta a sholáthar. Tá an fhoireann go léir ag obair as lámh a chéile chun meas ar an nGaeilge a chothú sna daltaí. Tá tuilleadh bhéim ar Gaeilge a labhairt sa scóil.

The Board and staff have begun the process of self-evaluation and appraisal. At present, the focus is on assessing current achievements and attainments and noting areas where further development of teaching and learning may be enhanced.