Whole School Evaluation REPORT

St John’s National School Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford Uimhir rolla: 13313S

Date of inspection: 19 September 2011
1. Introduction

St John's NS is a two-teacher co-educational school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh. There are 22 pupils enrolled in the school. Attendance rates are very good and enrolment trends are stable. 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:

- The board of management is well informed, pro-active and very committed to the school.
- The principal and deputy principal provide very strong leadership for the school.
- All teaching and ancillary staff members discharge their duties very conscientiously and competently.
- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is commendable.
- The quality of home-school partnership is very good and the highly committed parents' association provides a range of supports for the work of the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good in Irish, English, Mathematics and Geography.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- To extend the school-self evaluation process, it is recommended that specific, measurable targets be set and reviewed annually for prioritised aspects of the school’s work.
- The school should investigate the feasibility of using in-class supports and team teaching to develop short-term, flexible interventions for literacy and numeracy.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board members are well informed and very committed to the school. Board members have undertaken training for their roles and many have taken on specific tasks related to their particular areas of expertise. The board discharges its legal and planning duties very conscientiously. Financial accounts are audited independently on an annual basis.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal provides very strong leadership for the school. She articulates a shared vision for the school in regard to pupil welfare and educational outcomes. She discharges her duties very conscientiously and competently. The deputy principal fulfils a range of important curricular, administrative and pastoral duties very effectively. There is a commendable level of collaboration among the staff.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The board and staff are commended on the provision and maintenance of a very stimulating learning environment for the pupils. The part-time secretary, caretaker and cleaner carry out their duties very professionally. An extensive range of educational resources is available to support teaching and learning.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. The school communicates regularly with parents. A highly committed parents’ association provides a range of financial and material supports for the work of the school. All parents indicated that the school welcomes parents and it is commendable that many parents have sought and received Garda clearance to enable them support the work of the school. In response to the Inspectorate questionnaire, all parents expressed satisfaction with the accuracy of information provided in school reports and with the arrangements for parent-teacher meetings.

- The management of pupils is very successful. The relationship between staff and pupils is very positive and pupils’ conduct was exemplary during the evaluation. In response to the Inspectorate questionnaire most pupils commented favourably about feeling safe in school, receiving advice on bullying and being listened to by their teachers. Mechanisms, such as a student council, could be explored to give pupils a greater say in how things are done in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is commendable. A systematic process has existed for many years to ensure regular and collaborative review of curriculum and administrative policies. The school has analysed, tracked and graphed assessment data for literacy and numeracy. To further develop the school-self evaluation process, it is recommended that specific, measurable targets be set and reviewed annually for prioritised aspects of the school’s work.

- The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation is valuable. It is evident that whole-school planning impacts positively upon classroom planning and teaching methodologies. All teachers plan their work conscientiously and accurate progress records are maintained methodically.

- 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

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good overall. Teachers encourage high levels of pupil involvement to facilitate collaborative learning. Suitable resources and methodologies are deployed to assist with pupils’ understanding of concepts. Most pupils comment positively in their questionnaire responses about the clarity of explanations and their enjoyment of lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used frequently by teachers and pupils to facilitate and extend learning opportunities.

- Tá cáiliocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go h-an mhaith sa Ghaeilge. Déantar cúram inmholta de cheithre shn áithe an churaclaim. Leagtar béim luachmhar ar éisteacht agus tugtar dea-shampla labhartha do na daltaí. Úsáidtear an cur chuige cumarsáideach chun na daltaí a spreagadh agus cloistear Gaeilge ar chaighdeán inmholta uathu sa chomhrá beirte. Léann tromlach na ndaltaí le tuiscint agus le cruinneas. Forbraítear an scríbhneoireacht go móra agus tugtar deiseanna scríbhneoireachta sna seánaí éagsúla. Baintear fíúntas agus spraoi as an bhfilíocht.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupils’ achievement in Irish is very good. All four strands of the curriculum are addressed commendably. Valuable emphasis is placed on listening and pupils are given good example in regard to speaking. The communicative method is used to stimulate the pupils and they speak Irish of a praiseworthy quality in the paired conversations. Most pupils read with accuracy and comprehension. Writing is developed incrementally and pupils are given opportunity to write in various genres. Value and enjoyment are derived from poetry.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral language development is promoted systematically throughout the school and most pupils contribute confidently and articulately to class discussions. Reading standards are very good and reading materials are carefully matched to pupils’ abilities. Writing skills are developed incrementally and pupils write in a wide variety of genres. Teachers model and promote the process of writing and pupils frequently use computers to present final drafts of their stories for display in class booklets. Pupils’ handwriting is presented attractively at all levels, culminating in a neat cursive style in senior classes. Poetry is explored very beneficially.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Most pupils recall mathematical facts with speed and accuracy. Teachers promote uniform use of mathematical language among the pupils and this assists understanding. Resources are used frequently to assist with collaborative and discovery learning during the lessons. Cross-curricular projects provide for the application of mathematical concepts to children’s lives and to the environment. Problem-solving strategies are taught consistently and most pupils can solve age-appropriate problems accurately.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is very good. Resources, including ICT, are used very effectively to encourage exploration and contrast of carefully-chosen distant environments. Pupils demonstrate very good understanding of their local environment. The skills of mapping, observation and recording are fostered incrementally throughout the school.
• The quality of assessment is very good. Results of standardised, screening and diagnostic tests are analysed systematically. Teachers collect and maintain a range of assessment information on each pupil in a number of subject areas. Commendable sharing of assessment information between teachers was noted. Results of standardised test are communicated accurately to parents in school reports.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Existing policies and practices enable equitable access of pupils with special educational needs to the school. Pupils’ learning needs are identified through a comprehensive system of screening, observational and diagnostic assessment. The individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) contain specific and agreed targets for each instructional term. Effective communication between teachers contributes significantly to the quality of provision.

• The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Interventions are enhanced through the use of productive methodologies and suitable resources to promote understanding and pupil involvement. Support is provided in the areas of literacy and numeracy through the withdrawal model. The school should investigate the feasibility of using in-class supports and team teaching to develop flexible interventions for literacy and numeracy.

• The quality of outcomes and progression of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils who receive additional teaching are progressing well in relation to their ability levels.

Published February 2012
Appendix

School Response to the Report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school staff and board of management welcome the findings and recommendations in this report and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Education inspector for the highly comprehensive, courteous and professional manner in which he conducted the WSE.

The B.O.M. is pleased that the report acknowledges the dedication and commitment of the staff, B.O.M. members, parents’ association, parents and children all of whom contribute to the smooth running of the school.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

We welcome the positive appraisal of the work that is being done in St John’s NS and will endeavour to implement the recommendations of the report.