Whole School Evaluation REPORT

Cranny National School, Cranny, Ennis, Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla: 13804O

Date of inspection: 08 February 2011
1. Introduction

Cranny National School is a co-educational primary school situated in the small village of Cranny in west Clare. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. It currently caters for twenty-six pupils and has two mainstream class teachers. At the time of the evaluation, there were no pupils enrolled in first class or in fourth class.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in February 2011. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following are the <strong>main strengths</strong> of the work of the school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The quality of teaching and learning is very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Throughout the school, very effective differentiation strategies are used. Accordingly, lessons are very well matched to pupils’ levels of ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A positive atmosphere pervades the school. Pupils are very well behaved and they engage in all activities diligently and with enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The classrooms are well-maintained and provide stimulating and supportive learning environments. An abundance of helpful materials relating to many aspects of the curriculum is displayed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following <strong>main recommendations</strong> are made:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The board of management is advised to assume a more pro-active role in school self-evaluation and in overseeing the quality of teaching and learning in the school and the standards achieved by pupils. As a means of enhancing communication with the general parent body, the board should compile and distribute an annual report on the operation of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In order to further develop practice in the teaching of Drama, further emphasis should be placed on the development of pupils’ understanding of the elements of drama as an integral aspect of lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The development of an appropriate room for the instruction of pupils receiving resource teaching supports is recommended.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Quality of School Management

| The board of management operates well. It meets on a regular basis to discuss a range of issues including health and safety and the organisation of school events. The board is very effective in overseeing the maintenance of the school and its environs. |

accounts are certified annually. Policies are reviewed and ratified by the board and parents are given opportunities to contribute to this process. Members of the board of management have availed of some training for their roles. The board ensures that all pupils are enabled to become fully involved in school-related activities.

- The board is advised to assume a more pro-active role in overseeing the quality of teaching and learning in the school and the standards achieved by pupils. This may be achieved by monitoring whole-school trends in attainment through analysis of standardised test results and by pursuing school improvement in specific curriculum areas. It is recommended that the school’s targets for improvement be the subject of review and discussion on a cyclical basis. As a means of enhancing communication with the general parent body, the board is advised to compile and distribute an annual report on the operation of the school.

- The principal provides dedicated leadership to the school. She is committed to instigating improvements in teaching and learning through the use of a range of appropriate approaches and initiatives in each class. She ensures that the school is well-resourced and that organisational and curriculum plans are implemented consistently. The post-holder offers very good support to the principal and she undertakes a good range of duties conscientiously. There is very good collaboration between all personnel in the school.

- Pupils are very well managed. They approach their learning with diligence.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama is good. The addition of clear success criteria to these plans would assist the school in assessing their effectiveness.

- A range of clearly articulated administrative and management policies is made available. These policies are informative and reflect the current school context.

- Long-term and short-term plans and monthly progress reports (cuntais mhíosula) are prepared by all teachers. The quality of these plans is good and they reflect the teachers’ commitment to the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum.

- The school’s assessment practices are highly effective. A very good range of assessment tools is used to monitor pupils’ progress including class tests and standardised tests in English and Mathematics. The results of these assessments are used effectively to inform teaching and learning. Analysis of recent data indicates that pupils are making good progress in their work.

- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers demonstrate very good understanding of the needs of pupils who present with varying levels of ability and they are committed to providing broad and differentiated learning experiences to support pupils’ learning. Resources are used to optimum effect to provide for pupils’ level of ability.


Irish is taught very effectively. Cultural awareness is promoted throughout the school by placing a commendable emphasis on traditional singing and on traditional music. The pupils’ ability in speaking the language is very good. A wide range of resources and activities is used to teach and reinforce the functions of language. Opportunities are provided for pupils to speak the language during sketches, dramas and in responding to questions. In the junior classes, appropriate attention given to pre-reading activities. In the senior classes, pupils read with understanding. Writing skills are developed carefully and the standard of the written work is good.

- English is very well taught in each class. Lessons in oral language feature stimulating language games and the acquisition of vocabulary is emphasised. Pupils demonstrate competence in reading. In the early years, pupils’ phonemic awareness is very well developed through extensive use of rhymes and songs. A phonics programme is worked through progressively and word-attack skills are carefully taught. Teachers’ skilful questioning ensures that pupils’ higher-order thinking skills are well developed. In writing, an appropriate emphasis is placed on teaching the conventions of grammar and pupils’ functional and creative writing skills are very good.

- Mathematics is very well taught. Talk, discussion and active methodologies are well used to thoroughly examine concepts. Teachers place a good emphasis on the development of skills and strategies over the course of lessons. Number facts are consolidated using concrete materials. In the senior classes, many pupils demonstrate confidence in processing mathematical concepts orally, across the five strands of the curriculum.

- The teaching of Drama is carried out in a proficient manner. In both classes, teachers are adept in cultivating a safe environment and as a result pupils are expressive and fully engaged in the drama. Pupils co-operate well in exploring drama through mime activities and in making friezes. As a means of further developing practice, it is advised that further emphasis be placed on the development of pupils’ understanding of the elements of drama as an integral aspect of lessons.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The support for pupils with special educational needs is good. This includes provision of support by a resource teacher and by a learning support/resource teacher.
• The quality of resource teaching is good. Individual education plans (IEPs) have been devised and these outline very appropriate programmes of work. During the evaluation, the interactions observed between the teachers and the pupils were positive and encouraging. Currently, some of the support teaching is provided in the school’s administrative office. The development of this area to facilitate its use for teaching and learning purposes should be undertaken and it is recommended that the room include displays of supportive materials and samples of pupils’ work.

• The school’s approach to the identification of pupils who would benefit from learning-support and differentiated teaching is very good. This includes comprehensive analysis of standardised test results, continuous teacher observation and use of diagnostic tests. The learning-support teacher provides very good support to pupils. This takes the form of in-class support and withdrawal of individual and groups of pupils from the mainstream classroom. Clear learning outcomes in English and Mathematics are identified in the teacher’s plans which include individual and group plans. These outcomes are clearly addressed over the course of lessons using a good range of resources and methodologies.

Published October 2011