An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Knockaclarig, Brosna, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 14002G

Date of inspection: 19 October 2011
1. Introduction

Knockclairig N.S. is one of two primary schools in the parish of Brosna. It is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kerry. The school has a staffing of two mainstream teachers. Thirty-eight pupils are currently enrolled in the school. The attendance of the majority of pupils is very good. 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 school benefits from a supportive and effective board of management.
- The principal articulates a clear vision for the school and its pupils and the in-school management team manages the day-to-day operation of the school in an effective manner.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of an extremely high standard.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish and History is of a very high standard.
- The quality of planning and of lessons delivered in special education settings is of a very high quality.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the school engage in reflective and systematic self-evaluation which has the explicit purpose of improving the quality of pupils’ experiences and standards of attainment.
- It is recommended that the school review the whole-school English plan and whole-school approaches to the teaching of literacy should be identified and implemented.
- It is recommended that the board drafts a strategic plan for the improvement of the building.
- It is recommended that the school devise an assessment and a record keeping policy.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is effective in its management of the school. Collectively, the board expresses high levels of satisfaction with the manner in which the school is run. This view is supported in the responses of parents to questionnaires issued during the evaluation. It is recommended that the board publish an annual report on the operation and performance of the school. It is also recommended that the board draft and ratify a comprehensive attendance policy.
• The principal articulates a clear vision for the school and its pupils and he manages the
day-to-day operation of the school in an effective manner. A strong ethos of teamwork
and collegiality has been established between the principal and deputy principal. The
deput principal discharges a comprehensive range of duties conscientiously. It is
recommended that the duties of the deputy principal be regularly reviewed to reflect
identified school priorities.

• The school building, comprising of three classrooms and toilets, was erected in 1890.
Individual classrooms are well resourced with a range of supportive materials which are
very effectively utilised by the teachers. Parents, in their responses to questionnaires
issued, expressed concern regarding the school’s facilities. The board is currently
endeavouring to address the significant renovation needs of the school. In this context, it
is recommended that the board drafts a strategic plan to assist in this endeavour.

• The board is also encouraged to examine and respond to other issues raised in the
parent questionnaires. This should result in enabling parents to play a more active role in
the school. Parents attend and support a wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular
activities organised by the school. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. Renewed
efforts should also be made to facilitate the establishment of a parent association.

• A warm and respectful rapport has been successfully established between pupils and
teachers. Pupils are well motivated and eager to learn. They listen attentively and display
positive attitudes towards learning. Their responses to the questionnaires issued are, in
general, very positive. The identification of specific content to be addressed in discrete
Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons should however be addressed.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• School management is praised for the drafting and ratification of a range of curriculum
plans and organisational policies. It is recommended however that the board drafts a plan
for the cyclical review of these documents and that it facilitates the engagement of
parents in this process.

• The school has not yet engaged in a process of school self-evaluation. It is
recommended therefore that the school engage in reflective and systematic self-
evaluation which has the explicit purpose of improving the quality of pupils’ experiences
and standards of attainment.

• Both teachers conscientiously prepare very good long-term and short-term schemes of
work. Monthly reports, outlining the content of the lessons delivered, are systematically
recorded and maintained. It is recommended that teachers devise an agreed format for
the recording of work completed and that these documents be utilised to support the
process of school self-evaluation.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the
Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011)
without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary
Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are
being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently
published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-
Primary Schools as a matter of priority.
5. **Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement**

- The quality of teaching and learning is of a good to very good standard. Teachers are highly commended for the utilisation of innovative teaching approaches, including the use of ICT, which succeed admirably in engaging pupils in the learning process and in progressing their understanding, knowledge and skills. Well-managed discussions build pupil confidence and nurture their natural curiosity. Increased focus on developing pupils’ independent learning skills and on paired and group work would further enhance current provision.

- Some very good examples of the teaching of English were observed during the evaluation period and many of the pupils are achieving good literacy levels. However, teaching and learning in English would be enhanced through the identification and implementation of whole-school approaches to the teaching of literacy. It is recommended that the school review the whole-school English plan. Care should be taken to outline agreed approaches to the teaching of oral language, reading and writing. Serious consideration should be given to the use of assessment data to identify pupil needs. The reviewed plan should make provision for individuals or groups of pupils with differing abilities and aptitudes, ensuring that all are challenged at an appropriate level.

- Baintear caighdeáin arda amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge sa scoil. Bionn na daltaí in ann iad féin a chur in iúl go muinínea trí Ghaeilge agus tá stóir leathan d’fhocail acu. Is féidir leis an pár a chlúadh sa chúram sa stór. Leann siad le crúnneas agus le liofacht. Is fiú machnamh a dheimhni ar aird níos treise a dhíriú ar chineálacha éagsúla scríbhneoireachta sa Ghaeilge a leathnú. High standards are achieved in the teaching and learning of Irish in this school. Pupils can express themselves confidently in Irish and they possess a wide vocabulary. They participate effortlessly in Irish conversations. They read with accuracy and fluency. Consideration should now be given to expanding the variety of writing genres in Irish throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of the highest standard. Innovative use is made of ICT in teaching and learning. Group work and the very effective use of concrete materials ensure that pupil learning is significantly progressed and that Mathematics is viewed by pupils as relevant to their daily lives.

- Teachers are highly praised for delivering a stimulating history programme to the pupils. The school is also highly commended for the use of local contexts, contemporary politics and educational visits to make History exciting and relevant for the pupils. Pupil attainment in History is of a very high standard.

- Standardised tests in literacy and numeracy are administered annually to pupils from first to sixth class and results are effectively communicated to parents. Teachers regularly administer teacher-designed tests to ascertain pupils understanding of specific topics. Samples of pupils' work are maintained. However, the provision of a coherent approach to the assessment and recording of pupils’ progress requires significant development. The school should record, collate and analyse a range of data to monitor and plan for improvements in pupil learning. It is recommended that school management with the teachers devises an assessment and record keeping policy. It is further recommended that school management issue end-of-year progress reports to the parents of all pupils attending the school.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- A learning support teacher works in the school for five hours per week. A resource teacher for pupils with special educational needs works in the school for nine hours per week. Both teachers are based in neighbouring schools. The quality of the individual education plans prepared for pupils in receipt of support is of a very high standard. Lessons observed were well structured and commendably focused on progressing the learning of pupils in targeted areas. The school employs two part-time special needs assistants (SNAs) to support pupils with special educational needs. It is recommended that the present learning-support policy be reviewed and that criteria for the selection of pupils in need of support be identified. Reference should also be made to the organisation of early identification and prevention initiatives involving support teachers, as appropriate.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board is in receipt of the WSE report and notes its contents and findings. It is delighted that the very high standard of teaching and learning at Knockaclarig NS. is acknowledged.

It is heartening to note that the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of The Board of Management, Principal, in-school management team, teachers, ancillary staff, parents and pupils have been recognised and affirmed. It is delighted that the professionalism of the teaching staff has been given due credit for its pedagogical preparation, planning and delivery of the curriculum.

It particularly celebrates the extremely high standard achieved in the curricular area of Mathematics. The very positive responses to the parental and pupil questionnaires are very pleasing. The Board sees this element of the report as an endorsement of the management, administrative, development and pedagogical policies embedded in the ethos and culture of the school down through the decades.

It felt that more recognition could be given to the local, National and European ICT status that the school enjoys. This point is made against the backdrop that an agency (Comenius) within the European Union publicly cites the school as an outstanding example of digital literacy.

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

Work has already begun on the reviewing of the whole English plan. This plan was already up for review at the time of the WSE. Many new strategies are already being implemented including a new oral language programme for all classes.

On the item of school self evaluation of the school has already participated in the first day of a two day programme of this new initiative ----- “School Self Evaluation and Data Analysis” mediated by the PDST and hosted by The Education Centre. The content of the day has been relayed to the staff and discussed with a view to implement same.

On upgrading the building the Board expects to embark on a refurbishment phase by the 1st July 2012.

The process of upgrading the school’s assessment and recording policy is currently underway.