Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Eoin Aspal
Mayfield, Cork
Uimhir rolla: 14198D

Date of inspection: 26 February 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Scoil Eoin Aspal, Mayfield, Cork was undertaken in February 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Science. 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The following table provides an overview of the enrolment and staffing in the school at the time of the evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils enrolled in the school</th>
<th>187</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream classes in the school</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers on the school staff</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream class teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers working in support roles[8 based in this school and 1 teacher based in another school]</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs assistants</td>
<td>3</td>
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Scoil Eoin Aspal is a boys’ school in the northern suburbs of Cork. There is significant socio-economic deprivation in parts of its catchment area and therefore the school is designated an Urban Band 1 school within the Department of Education and Skills initiative, Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools (DEIS). As part of this initiative, the school avails of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme, the Support Teacher Project and the School Completion Programme. As part of the school’s involvement in DEIS initiatives, the school runs a breakfast club, a homework club and uses the extra DEIS funding in a variety of appropriate ways. The school also assists with the purchase of uniforms and school books and supports the provision of psychological assessments in order to ensure that all pupils who need support have access to resource teaching services. In order to help pupils on a broader level, the board of management maintains open communication channels with external bodies such as Mayfield Educational Action group, the HSE and Barnardos.

The school opened in 1973 to cater for pupils from a major social housing development in that part of the city and at its peak the school catered for 800 pupils. There has been a steady decline in enrolment since then. In 2005, the enrolment stood at 269 pupils and at the beginning of the current school year, enrolment was down to 187 pupils. In spite of the many difficulties faced by the school community, average attendance, almost at 90%, is relatively good and the efforts of all concerned to maintain a tradition of high attendance is to be commended.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision

The school’s vision is to ensure that each pupil, through positive learning experiences, will be stimulated to achieve his full potential and to face life confidently, finding fulfilment and respect.
in a changing world. Its mission is to create a community that works together harmoniously and inculcate values of respect, tolerance, support and celebration of diversity. The staff strives to make the school a happy place and places a high value on pastoral care in its policy statements.

1.2 Board of management
The board of management is properly constituted and meets at least twice per term. The chairperson and principal meet regularly and the chairperson is also in school for special occasions. The roles of treasurer and secretary have been delegated among board members and the treasurer presents a report at meetings and ensures that the accounts are certified externally as is required by the Education Act. Board members have received training for their roles and functions. The present and previous boards have worked conscientiously to ensure the building is maintained to a high standard. In order to ensure the work environment for pupils and staff is of a high standard, the board employs four cleaners, one full-time caretaker and one part-time groundsman. Plans for the continued maintenance of the school are under consideration and should be documented. The board strives to maintain good communication processes around policy development and policy dissemination. In general, staff members draft policies and mechanisms are in place to consult with the parents’ association before the policies are brought to the board. The board maintains ongoing communication with parents by placing a report on the work of the school in a newsletter at Christmas and at the end of the year. In addition, new parents get a pack of policies when their children start school. Curricular policies are not discussed by the board. It is now recommended that these policies should be discussed and ratified at board level and subsequently signed and dated by the chairperson. The board should also be made aware of standards of achievement of the pupils in the school.

1.3 In-school management
The in-school management team is comprised of the principal, the deputy principal, an assistant principal and four special duties teachers. The principal has been in this role since 1998. He is very involved with all the stakeholders in the school and to ensure strong internal communication processes he visits classes on a weekly basis and engages with teachers and pupils on the work of the class. The principal is very keen to ensure that the teaching and learning environment for both pupils and staff is of the highest standard possible. Over the past ten years he has instigated a number of key initiatives designed to ensure the building and its environs are attractive, secure and fit for purpose. He has worked closely with the board to ensure these initiatives were brought to fruition. In 2001, the principal, with the board, initiated a project to replace the original flat roof with a more energy efficient hip roof and replace all the windows in the school with more energy efficient replacements. In 2006, the principal and the board initiated a project to rewire the entire building and in 2007, the playgrounds were resurfaced and a new stage and sound system installed. Recently, the principal brought to the board, three projects for the future and these are: the installation of interactive whiteboards in mainstream classrooms, the development of a water-harvesting system from the new roof and the development of a wind energy mechanism to meet the school’s electricity needs. The principal is to be complimented on his foresight in developing such plans.

There is a strong supportive culture discernible among members of the management team. The deputy principal is very supportive of the principal and meets with him regularly. The deputy principal has overall coordination responsibility for special educational needs provision. This work involves setting termly targets with the special needs team and sharing these with the staff. Curricular, organisational and pastoral duties have been assigned to post-holders and are reviewed periodically. These duties are carried out conscientiously and diligently and contribute positively to school management and organisation. Post-holders have the added facility to report progress at staff meetings and this facility is availed of regularly. The in-school management team is pro-
active and is keen to develop initiatives to ensure learning takes place in a stimulating manner. Some of the curricular initiatives initiated by team members include Maths Week, Buddy Maths, Tables Quizzes and the Ready Set Go Maths programme. In-school management personnel meet each term, usually following the lunch-time break. Their teaching duties are attended to by other members of the teaching staff during this period. Management is advised to review this process and to conduct meetings of the in-school management team outside of school hours, to ensure the least disruption possible to the school programme.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community
The parents’ association has three very active officers - chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The association has regular contact with the principal and organises the welcome for new parents and pupils. The officers also visit the parents of new pupils in their homes to help pupils and parents prepare for the start of school. The visits are part of a scheme Parents Helping Parents and the officers involved have undertaken training to prepare for this work. Parents also help out with certain social occasions. Overall, the school is good at encouraging parental involvement and parents are involved in shared reading, Maths for Fun, Boardgames for Fun and gardening and they help with reading of class novels. Parents are invited to help out with extra-curricular activities including school tours and sponsored walks. Fund raising is also an important feature of the association’s work and funds are raised for the purchase of resources for the school. There are very good processes in place that ensure communication between stakeholders is of a high quality. The parents’ representatives expressed satisfaction at the pre-evaluation meetings with the communication processes in the school, and their role in developing some school policies, including the policy on bullying and homework, was acknowledged.

1.5 Management of pupils

The teachers are sensitive to the needs of the pupils and treat them with care. During the whole school evaluation the pupils engaged diligently in their work and cooperated willingly with staff. The pupils answered confidently when questioned by the inspectors. The school ensures that pupils are supervised conscientiously during break times.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning

A range of organisational and administrative policies has been devised to facilitate the day-to-day functioning of the school and to respond to the requirements of current legislation. The policies are informative, they are well presented and accessible to the school community. The school plan has been developed under the guidance of the principal with the collaboration of the teaching staff. Planning teams are regularly formed to aid this process with curricular responsibilities assigned to members of the in-school management team. All administrative policies have been scrutinised by the board of management. A number of the administrative policies were signed and dated prior to the commencement of the WSE and the board is reminded to sign and date remaining policies to complete the ratification process. The members of the parents’ association are involved in policy development in key areas such as code of behaviour, homework, and healthy eating, among others. Relevant policies, including those on enrolment and the code of behaviour are issued to parents on the enrolment of their children. It is now appropriate that the elements relating to the enrolment of special needs pupils be amended to comply with current legislation under the Equal Status Act (2000).
The staff have identified the raising of literacy and numeracy standards in the school as a challenge for the future. In addition, a commitment to improving pupils’ attendance levels and the further development of parents’ involvement in their children’s education have been identified clearly in the school’s Developing Equality of Opportunity in Schools’ plan (DEIS). The services of the DEIS cuiditheoir have been availed of and literacy and numeracy sub-committees have been formed. Worthwhile programmes such as First Steps, Maths Recovery and Ready Set Go Maths, among others, have been embraced by staff. Clear and measurable targets are set, progress is monitored regularly and a period for review is set annually.

In the interests of developing a greater linkage between whole-school planning and classroom practice teachers should consider adding to the detail in a number of whole-school curricular plans. To this end, providing an outline of appropriate poetry in English and in Irish for each class unit is advised. Staff could also consider compiling a list of “frásai na seachtaine” in the interests of promoting Irish as a functional language throughout the school. Staff have identified in the school’s curricular plans, the importance of a whole-school approach to the development of mathematical language. Teachers are advised accordingly to develop a clear outline of appropriate terminology for each class unit in the interests of promoting clarity of usage.

The quality of classroom planning and planning processes are good. The school uses a standardised template for short-term and long-term notes. The processes include weekly collaboration sessions between class teacher and support teachers for planning purposes. Many teachers go beyond the confines of the standardised template by providing extra detailed notes which focus on aims, content, methodologies and strategies. Copies of the whole school curricular plans are in the teachers’ planning folders. Long-term plans play a prominent role in planning in the case of many teachers and it would now be advisable for the staff to explore ways in which to align whole-school planning, long-term planning and short-term planning.

Most of the support teachers are planning using generalised termly objectives which support the programmes engaged in by the class teacher. Individualised plans are provided for pupils with specific allocations of resource hours. There is little provision of focussed short-term planning that identifies key learning goals or targets to be achieved by the pupils. In one instance, where short-term planning is being provided on a weekly and daily basis, the teacher can track clearly the pupils’ achievements. It is recommended that this commendable short-term targeting of teaching and learning should be developed, using a universal format, and used by all members of the special needs team.

2.2 Child protection policy and procedures

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Skills Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department’s Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools (2001). Confirmation was also provided 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.
3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 Language

_Gaeilge_

Baintear dea-úsáid as an gcur chuige cumarsáideach i roinnt de na bunranganna. Tá béim chuí ar ghníomháfochaí éisteachta sna ranganna seo a chuimhsionn éisteachta le rainn, le dáta agus leis an oide. Múineadh corp deas rann agus amhrán i mnbunranganna áirithe agus b’fhíú go mór an gné seo a leathnú go dit na bunranganna go léir. Sna meánranganna, cuirtear leis an obair éisteachta agus baintear úsáid as dlúthdhioscaí chun cleachtait éisteachta a fhórrait. I bhformhór na meánranganna, baintear úsáid as an nGaeilge an t-am ar fad i rith na gceachtanna agus is dea-nós é seo chun scileanna éisteachta a chothú. Bíonn éagsúlacht bhreá ag baint le ghníomháfochaí i gceachtanna áirithe agus mar chuid de na ceachtanna sin imrítear cluichí foclóra, foghaimhitéar dáta agus cleachtaitear an folcóir nua le comhrá leanúnach. I ranganna áirithe nasc tar cleachtait éisteachta, comhrá agus léitheoireachta le scribhneoireachta. Is dea-chleachtas é seo. Tá timpeallacht Ghaelach léirithe i seomraí áirithe agus aisgnach cúnna Gaeilge i ngach seomra ranga. Tá príoseas na scribhneoireachta a chúr chun cinn i ranganna áirithe agus éagsúlacht bhreá sna cleachtait scribhneoireachta sin.

Nótaítear go bhfuil leanúnachas idir obair na mbunranganna, na meánranganna agus obair i roinnt de na hardranganna leis an mbéim atá ar fhoghlaim agus ar athrís na filiochta. B’fhíú an nós seo a leathan trí phárnasas na pleanálta scoile agus tríd an modhág, ach go háirithe, a tugadh níos luaite ar leith an liostaí dháchta do gach rang a ullmhú agus liostaí d’frásaí na seachtain a phlé don phlean scoile. Forbráitear ar an teanga a mbeadh sna meánranganna agus léiriúonn sé seo forbairt chuí ar an bhfoghlaim. Tá úsáid as bhaint as abhar léirithe chun chúisíocht simplí a imirt agus cleachtaitear an teanga muínte le hobbair beirte. Tá déa-chaiighdeán scribhneoireachta idir chruthaítheach agus fearéidhmiúil le feiscint i ranganna áirithe agus tá nasc tar níosmholt a idir comhrá, léitheoireachta agus scribhneoireachta le feiscint sna ranganna sin. Cleachtaitear an scribhneoireacht le húsáid a bhaint as _genres_ difríula: litreacha, liostaí agus scéalta. B’fhíú an cleachtas a dhírdir le scribhneoireacht i _genres_ difríula a leathan trí úsáid a bhaint as príoseas na pleanála scoile.

_Irish_

Good use is made of the communicative method in some of the junior classes. There is an appropriate emphasis on listening activities in these classes that comprise listening to rhymes, to poems and to the teacher. A sound corpus of rhymes and songs has been taught in some junior classes and this aspect of language learning should be extended to all junior classes. In the middle classes, the work on listening is extended through the use of listening games based on compact discs. In the majority of middle classes, Irish is the sole medium of communication during Irish lessons and this is good practice for developing listening skills in the target language. There is good variety in the activities of certain lessons and as part of these lessons pupils engage in vocabulary games and learning or practising poems. Vocabulary is reinforced through use in continuous conversation practice. In certain classes, exercises in listening, conversation practice and reading are linked with writing. This is good practice. A visual Irish environment is in place in some rooms and it would be very worthwhile to create an Irish corner in every classroom. Process writing is being developed through a good variety of exercises in some classes.
Continuity between the work of junior and middle classes is observed in some senior classes with the emphasis that is placed on learning and reciting poetry. This continuity should be assured by whole-school planning and implementing the earlier recommendation regarding listing Irish poems for each class unit as well as including “frásai na seachtaine” in whole school plans. Instances were observed where the language taught in middle classes was extended in lessons in senior classes and these lessons proved to be very successful. In the senior classes, good use is made of visual material to teach the language and the taught language is reinforced by means of pair work. Good standards of both creative and functional writing in Irish were observed in some classes and noteworthy linking of conversation practice, reading and writing was in evidence. A variety of writing genres – letters, lists and stories – was in evidence. It would be worthwhile extending the practice of writing in a variety of genres by means of the whole-school planning process.

**English**
Appropriate attention is given to the development of pupils’ oral language skills that are taught through discrete oral language lessons and through reading and writing activities across a range of curricular areas. A commercial oral language programme is used to good effect in a number of classes. Good use is made of poetry, story and debate to enhance pupils’ skills. Pupils are afforded regular opportunities to recite, to compose their own poems and to appreciate a repertoire of verse suited to their age and interest levels.

A regular analysis of pupils’ ability levels in reading is undertaken. An examination of current reading scores attained in standardised tests demonstrates that a large number of pupils are experiencing difficulty. There has been a concerted effort by staff to improve literacy standards in the school and good progress is achieved in meeting the targets set out in the school’s DEIS plan. A wide range of strategies is gainfully used to develop reading skills. Under the school’s DEIS programme First Steps and Reading Recovery have been introduced. Of late, Reading Recovery has been set aside due to difficulties encountered during its implementation. Management is advised to review this decision and to explore ways of renewing this systematic and intensive initiative to support pupils’ reading development. The provision of team teaching is utilised to varying degrees of effectiveness to provide for differentiated instruction in specific reading skills. Station teaching in the junior classes is most effective in augmenting pupils’ proficiency levels and this activity should be further explored for adaptation in other classes.

Emergent reading skills are developed gainfully in the junior classes. A systematic approach to the development of pupils’ phonological and phonemic awareness skills is undertaken through a judicious application of the Jolly Phonics and Phonological Awareness Training (PAT) programmes. Staff select from a wide range of reading material to develop pupils’ interests in reading. A graded reading scheme forms the core of the reading programme and is appropriately supplemented by the use of the novel and by the promotion of library book reading. The school has a well-stocked central library which is used regularly by teachers to promote reading for pleasure. In the main, classroom libraries present with a range of suitable reading material and could be developed further to instil a love of reading in pupils and in the promotion of reading as a worthwhile pastime. Other worthy initiatives in train include, Book Week, Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) and a shared-reading programme involving parents.

Pupils are encouraged to write regularly in a range of genres and for a variety of purposes and writing tasks are linked appropriately to other areas of the curriculum. The use of the free writing copy is good practice in encouraging pupils to engage in writing activity. The compilation of anthologies of pupils’ personal writing is a praiseworthy feature and has the potential to be developed further on a whole-school basis. The display of pupils’ written work, the news corner
and the use of communication technology greatly enrich pupils’ writing experiences. Pupils are afforded opportunities to edit and redraft their writing in a number of classes and this activity is to be encouraged. In general the quality of pupils’ presentation of written work is good and pupils are encouraged to observe the conventions of writing. While pupils’ written work is monitored appropriately, greater emphasis should now be placed on the teaching and modelling of handwriting skills by teachers and the regular application of these skills to pupils’ work.

3.2 Mathematics
In the junior classes, numeracy skills relating to counting and identifying numbers as well as recognising shapes are developed appropriately. Pupils can also perform simple computing assignments with and without the use of equipment. Teachers deliver well structured lessons incorporating whole class teaching and group work and effective in-class support is provided by learning-support staff as part of an early intervention strategy. One teacher has undertaken a very interesting Maths Trail around the school grounds and this was a good method of linking knowledge of different topics done. In general, teachers make good use of equipment during lessons in particular when demonstrating concepts. It is advised that number rhymes are taught on a regular basis and it is recommended that the policy on work in copies and textbooks be examined. More emphasis should be placed on working out tasks in copies rather than in the textbooks.

In the middle classes, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of place value, fractions and time, and they compute effectively. In a number of classes there are Maths charts on the walls and Maths corners have been created. Some good work with practical equipment was observed during the WSE with pupils working in groups and receiving assistance from the learning-support teacher and the special needs assistant (SNA). Tables are learned and recited regularly and an emphasis on the language of Mathematics and on mental mathematics was discerned. During the evaluation, advice was given as to how to create contexts for problem solving in Mathematics. Problem solving should be a feature of all work in Mathematics and should be based on real life contexts. As was the case with the junior classes, consideration of the layout of copies is needed on a whole school basis. In some instances very little recording in copies was taking place.

In the senior classes, the pupils demonstrated good understanding of place value, decimals, equivalent fractions and geometry. In one instance a teacher related Mathematics to real life by making very good use of the pupils’ interest in sport. A chart of Premier League statistics was used to focus work on finding averages. Pupils worked on problems in pairs as part of the lesson and this was good practice. A second instance of this approach in the senior classes was equally successful. The teacher used real timetables for a lesson on time and distance. The pupils respond well to this approach as it creates interest. There is also a noteworthy emphasis on mental work and regular mental revision is undertaken. This is good practice. Weaker pupils work with the learning-support teacher on a withdrawal basis during Mathematics lessons. This work is coordinated to ensure that the pupils are covering the same topic at an appropriate pace. Copies are laid out neatly for the most part in the senior classes.

3.3 Science
The Science programme is taught over a two-year period. Lessons are carefully structured, well-paced and developed. Teachers give clear explanations to pupils, present content clearly and their use of skilful questioning ensures pupils are challenged sufficiently at each class level. A variety of methodologies is employed that embraces whole-class teaching and group work, with a worthy emphasis placed on cooperative learning during hands-on activity. Pupils’ ideas are elicited at the beginning of lessons and their ideas are used successfully to develop understanding. Attempts are also made regularly to relate activities to every-day activities. The pupils exhibit considerable
enthusiasm for Science. They are afforded frequent opportunities to engage in experiments with sufficient attention given to the development of skills in observation, in prediction and in investigation. The promotion of healthy eating habits among pupils is commendable. Aspects of growth are explored at each class level and the senior pupils’ development of a school vegetable garden is worthy of particular mention. Parents are commended on their involvement in the school’s recently organised plant fair, an event that proved to be most successful. The pupils’ knowledge in Science is developed suitably through their exploration of a variety of habitats and through their regular engagement with environmental care issues. The pupils’ awareness of green issues is enhanced effectively through their involvement in the Green-Schools initiative. Staff and pupils are commended on their recent achievement of the Green Flag. Visits to the Lifetime Laboratory and to Cork Institute of Technology were successful in extending their knowledge of Science. The further provision of nature and investigation tables in classrooms is encouraged, together with an increased emphasis on recording in copybooks, to promote Science throughout the school.

3.4 Assessment

The school administers the MICRA-T and SIGMA-T standardised tests for literacy and numeracy annually from first class to sixth class. This enables teachers to identify pupils below the 10th percentile who are referred for additional intervention from support teachers. The Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is administered in the spring term as an early intervention test for pupils in senior infants.

The results of standardised testing are monitored on a whole school basis and show that over the past four years the school has managed to reduce consistently the number of pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile in both literacy and numeracy. However, similar success has not been gained in raising overall levels of achievement. The collated results from the screening instruments demonstrate that a large cohort of pupils is on or below the 50th percentile in literacy and numeracy. A review of previous years indicates that despite school-based interventions there has been little improvement of scores on standardised assessments. The school is aware of the difficulties here and is seeking to raise overall standards through new interventions. To address this challenge, the school might consider assessing pupils at an earlier stage in their school career as tests that identify phonological abilities, emergent literacy and early maths concepts can be conducted with pupils at junior infant level. The school has identified a number of senior pupils for psychological assessment using the staged process of the National Educational Psychological Service and the school might now explore if structures could be put in place that might assist in earlier identification of pupils who might benefit from this assessment of need. It would be worthwhile for the in-school management team to continue to develop further its criteria for judging the effectiveness of the supports provided, to deliberate as a school on this matter regularly and to document deliberations and results in a single folder.

The school’s assessment policy could be adjusted to include a clear reference to those pupils who are scoring at or above the 85th percentile and how the school will endeavour to meet their particular learning needs. There was evidence available of pupils scoring above the 95th percentile on standardised assessments and these pupils need additional support, through focussed strategies adopted by classroom teachers, to assist them to excel and diversify their achievements. Furthermore, these pupils could be constructively deployed in mixed ability groupings in the class to provide assistance to peers as a conduit to higher order literacy skills or to explore alternative strategies for problem solving.
4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs

The pupils with special educational needs are supported by a team of five full-time teachers who are deployed to the various class levels across the school. Teachers in the main provide assistance to single class levels. Three of the teachers are assigned a class level each at fourth to sixth class while the two remaining teachers are assigned to the junior section of the school. Overall, this presents as a sensible arrangement. The principal, in conjunction with the management team, has developed priorities for the coming years to include further reconfiguring of elements of the school’s special educational needs service by placing a new emphasis on the weakest pupils based on standardised testing. It is recommended that the school engage with Reading Recovery as part of this reconfiguration.

Some of the support teachers are engaged with in-class support and this is a strategy that could be expanded within the school. The station teaching observed in the junior classes involving the class teacher and support teacher was particularly valuable as one of the stations required the pupils to work independently. This assists in developing the pupils’ self-determination and social maturity at an early age and could be very beneficial to their subsequent class-based work. Good use is made of the Phonological Awareness Training (PAT) programme for the junior pupils to develop the pupils’ phonic and word attack skills in conjunction with the Jolly Phonics programme. The school is recommended to review the DVD currently available from the Special Education Support Service on ‘Co-operative Teaching - Towards including pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom’. This resource could assist the school in developing practices for parallel teaching, classic team-teaching and co-operative teaching as part of the menu of in-class support available in the school.

During the period of evaluation, there was little observable use of ICT with pupils attending support tuition. It would be worthwhile to explore the consistent application of ICT in support contexts across the school. There is a variety of available software that can assist pupils to gain competency in computational skills, problem solving, word recognition and creative writing among others. Additional programmes such as those for the recognition of emotions, discussion of social choices and behavioural options could be deployed with pupils who have resource hours for emotional or behavioural support. These could help to develop their perspectives on socially acceptable behaviour in a supportive non-threatening context. There were a number of incidents of non-compliance from pupils during the observation of support tuition. The incentive of working on computers might prove to be more motivating for resistant pupils as they are being provided with a more enticing prospect than textbook work. Pupils exhibiting oppositional behaviour may be more receptive to correction from the computer programme than from an adult and a possible trigger for confrontation could be avoided.

Some of the support teachers have used diagnostic instruments such as Literacy Probe and Dolch lists but others have not engaged in any diagnostic assessment of specific difficulties in the current year. It is recommended that the range of assessments within the school be expanded and diagnostic testing should occur for each identified pupil with specific support needs at least annually. It is further recommended that the school consider releasing a member of the special educational team to attend the continuous professional development course available in special educational needs. This would develop specific expertise for the school by enhancing the knowledge of specific conditions, developing the range of assessment and diagnostic resources and sharing current best practice with colleagues.
There are three special needs assistants (SNAs) in the school helping pupils with ADHD and hearing difficulty. The SNAs are integrated into the life of the school and consult regularly with class teachers as to their duties. The SNAs are always on playground duty when the pupils are at play. The SNAs are willing to play a wider role in the school and when the special needs pupils go to resource classes, they help other pupils in the classroom. They also help out with school activities and with preparations for special occasions. They have received training in physical handling of pupils. The deputy principal has responsibility for the SNAs for reporting purposes and meets with them once a week. Overall, the SNAs provide a valuable service in the school.

4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups
The school has a language support teacher position that is shared with the girls’ school in the parish. The nine pupils identified for support are provided with tuition on an individual, paired and group basis. Supportive and positive teacher-pupil interactions are in evidence with all the observed pupils eager to commence activities and remaining on task for the duration of the lesson. Currently there are no established systems for the class teachers to share planning on priority aims with the language support teacher to enable her to address the areas causing concern in a consistent and proactive manner. It is recommended that procedures are established to enhance sharing of language needs of pupils between class teachers and the support teacher.

The school has access to the services of a resource teacher for Travellers (RTT) who is based in a neighbouring school. This teacher maintains an IEP for each pupil in her care and the school also has a support plan for pupils who are entitled to special educational needs (SEN) support and RTT support. The plans are reviewed in March and in June, the latter review is undertaken in preparation for the following year. In order to avoid duplication, the SEN teachers concentrate on numeracy and the RTT concentrates on literacy. This is a wise division of labour. The RTT calls in parents on a regular basis to both affirm pupils and discuss the long-term and short-term plans for the pupil. This openness is a very positive development. The work in class is supplemented when pupils are helped with the reading of class novels and the pupils are helped to formulate responses to reading material in their own words. This is a good approach. Overall, the work undertaken for Traveller pupils is of a good standard and the teacher provides a weekly comment on pupils’ progress and on pupils’ attendance for the parents.

The school avails of the services of a committed and conscientious home school liaison teacher (HSCL). This is his second year involved in the programme and he is focussed on the continuing promotion of partnership to support the children’s education. To this end he visits parents regularly in the home and encourages their involvement in school initiatives. A bright and cheerful parents’ room has been developed where parents can meet and discuss issues freely. A variety of courses is organised to up-skill parents and these have proved to be of great benefit. It would be worthwhile to encourage parents to pursue these courses to Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) level. A good example of the sensible initiatives that the school has undertaken is the training of three parents to act as home-visitors and their role has been described earlier. Close links are maintained with community agencies such as Mayfield Education Action Group and the Neighbourhood Youth Project in the promotion of further positive partnership. A homework and breakfast club is supervised by teachers and parents under the aegis of the HSCL initiative and these form an essential core to the school’s efforts to support pupils.

The school was granted a full-time teacher under the Department’s pilot support-teacher scheme. A comprehensive programme to promote positive behaviour has been compiled by the teacher. A profile of each pupil is compiled and the teacher sets constructive targets in addressing the pupils’ social and emotional needs. The teacher currently has a cohort of seventeen pupils from junior
infants to sixth class. The interactions observed between the teacher and the pupils were affirming and encouraging. Effective strategies such as project-work, group tasks and games were employed to good effect to develop the pupils’ oral and listening skills and to address such issues as self-esteem, anger management and respect. The children are supported very well to make the transition from primary to post-primary school. The teacher is most professional in her practice and works in close cooperation with the other teachers and with parents.

The school is in receipt of additional support from the School Completion Programme (SCP) for three periods each week. The staff member shares her time with two further schools in the Mayfield/Glen area. Carefully selected groups are chosen from junior infants to sixth class and a programme has been devised to support pupils. Cooperative games, team-building exercises and circle-time are engaged in regularly to achieve programme aims in social development. She liaises regularly with community agencies in the planning and coordination of the school holiday programmes. She meets at regular intervals with fellow key workers and with the programme coordinator to plan, to review and to evaluate the various programmes. She works diligently and is committed to supporting these children.

5. CONCLUSION
Despite difficulties, the school has many strengths. These include the work done on a school choir. There is a positive spirit among the staff and they are willing to undertake new interventions to help pupils. The pupils are involved in Gaelic football and hurling, tennis, soccer and swimming. The school soccer teams have had considerable success and this year and won the Cork City Primary School Soccer Championship and the Munster Primary Schools Soccer Championship. The pupils, parents and teachers work together on the school garden and grow their own vegetables which are then cooked and eaten together. The school has won a Tidy Districts competition and a Green Flag. Success with all of these initiatives is very much due to the dedication of the teachers involved and the cooperation between pupils, parents, board of management and staff.

The school has strengths in the following areas:
• The chairperson of the board and the board itself are committed to developing the school.
• The principal is to be complimented on his foresight in developing plans to make the school truly green and in coordinating the many educational initiatives that are underway.
• There is a strong supportive culture discernible among members of the management team.
• The teachers are diligent and are open to change and innovation.
• The staff is commitment to addressing the social and educational needs of the pupils.
• A spirit of partnership exists between the staff and the wider community.
• The school policies are informative and they are well presented.
• The school library is a well-presented and productive resource in the promotion of reading.
• Pupil achievement is celebrated regularly.
• The school is praised on achieving Green-Flag status and on its commitment to raising awareness among pupils in caring for the environment
• The school has achieved noteworthy success in sport.

The following key recommendations are made in order to further improve the quality of education provided by the school:
• The in-school management team meetings should be conducted outside of school hours, to ensure the least disruption possible to the school programme.
• More concrete decisions in whole-school planning documentation around poetry in Irish and English, songs, continuity in writing activities and use of copies in Mathematics are recommended.
• It is recommended that the elements of the school’s enrolment policy relating to the enrolment of special needs pupils be amended to comply with current legislation under the Equal Status Act (2000).
• The Reading Recovery programme should be revived.
• A greater emphasis on active learning methodologies, such as the observed station teaching in junior classes, is recommended.
• It is recommended that more formal liaison structures be established for the sharing of information and planning across the team of support teachers deployed in the school to ensure consistency in addressing identified priority areas in a pupil’s education plan and also to co-ordinate withdrawal procedures across the school.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.
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 welcomes the W.S.E. Report and thanks the Inspectors for their courtesy and professionalism throughout the evaluation process. The Board is pleased to note that the many areas of strength are acknowledged in the report, including the high rate of pupil attendance, the dedicated, caring and innovative approach of the principal and staff and the spirit of positive co-operation among all stakeholders. The Board proudly welcomes the affirmation of the pupils’ efforts, their diligence and self-confident approach. Furthermore, the Board is pleased to note that the strong traditions of sport and music are acknowledged.

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 School’s Enrolment Policy has been amended to comply with all current legislation and has been ratified by the Board of Management. The Reading Recovery Programme has been revived and is being implemented from the start of this school year (2010/2011). All other key recommendations are being addressed and are central to the on-going development of the school plan.