Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Loughfouder N.S.,
Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 14366V

Date of inspection: 21 September 2011
1. Introduction

Loughfouder N.S. is one of two primary schools in the parish of Knocknagoshel. It is a two teacher school with an enrolment of 24 pupils. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. A learning-support teacher, based in the school, provides support to pupils with special educational needs for thirteen hours a week. Pupil attendance is 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 board of management, the parents and the wider community are highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard.
- Resources are very effectively utilised to support learning and teaching.
- Pupils present as confident and courteous individuals who display a genuine interest in learning.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in this school is of a very high standard.
- The school is highly commended for the manner in which it meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the board devise a plan for the cyclical review of existing plans and policies.
- It is recommended that the school identify effective systems for keeping its work under review and for identifying and implementing changes to bring about improvement.
- It is recommended that teachers extend the range of assessment modes utilised and that a means of formally recording pupil progress across all curriculum areas be developed.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted. Individual board members undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively. Comprehensive minutes of meetings are maintained. Care is taken to ensure that the decisions of the board are informed by and compliant with legislation and with Department circulars. It is recommended that the board prepare an annual report of its work.
The principal discharges his duties in a highly effective manner. He is ably assisted by the deputy principal to whom a range of duties have been delegated and which she discharges conscientiously. It is now recommended that these duties be reviewed on a regular basis and that they reflect more closely the identified development needs of the school.

The school grounds and building are maintained to a very high standard. Teachers have access to a wide variety of resources which they utilise to very good effect to support learning and teaching.

The management of pupils in this school is highly effective. During the evaluation period, the pupils presented as courteous, confident and co-operative individuals. In their responses to questionnaires issued, pupils unanimously state that they enjoy school and that the school is good. An impressive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are organised annually and pupils' benefit greatly from their engagement in these events.

The school has established very good relationships and communications with the school community. It is reported that parents are highly supportive of the school. They play an active part in the activities organised. Responses to questionnaires completed by parents reflect their very high satisfaction with how the school is run and with the manner in which it meets the needs of its pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

A range of curriculum plans and organisational policies have been drafted by the staff of the school. These are, in general, of a good quality. Many of these documents have been ratified by the board. It is recommended that the board devise a plan for the cyclical review of existing plans and policies.

Mainstream teachers prepare comprehensive long and short-term plans in preparation for their work. Currently, this planning focuses on outlining the lesson content to be addressed with class groups in each subject area. It is recommended that the focus of teachers' long and short term planning reflect the objectives of the Primary School Curriculum to a greater extent. Monthly progress reports are also maintained. It is recommended that these reports be utilised when reviewing the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

The school has not developed a systematic approach to school self-evaluation. While care and attention is given to meeting the needs of individual pupils, there is a need to engage in a process of school review which leads to the identification of the school’s strengths and areas in need of development. It is recommended that the school identify effective systems for keeping its work under review and for identifying and implementing changes to bring about improvement.

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 overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in this school is of a very high standard. Teachers undertake their teaching duties in a highly professional manner. Care is taken to ensure that the learning needs of individual pupils are met. Focused, individual attention is given to pupils in need of support. Lessons are well structured and paced. Instructions given by the teachers are clear and unambiguous. Very appropriate learning activities are organised. Pupils are making very good progress in the learning commensurate with their abilities.

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go han-éifeachtach sa scoil seo. Bíonn caint na n-oidí mar eiseamláir breá do chaint na ndaltaí. Cuireann na n-oidí béim inmholta ar an gcur chuige chúmharsaide agus dá bhí sin, labhraíonn na ndaltaí le cruinneas agus úsaideann siad foclóir leathain. Léann formhór na ndaltaí go liofa agus is féidir leo ábhar na léitheoireachta a phlé go phile. Múintear stóirí, ar bhealaí an-chinntí, agus pléitear ábhar na hoibre go hoiriúnach roimh á léamh agus i ndiaidh a léite. Tá cleachtas an-mhaith ar bun maidir le teagasc na scribhneoireachta Gaeilge sna ranganna go léir. Tá neart samplaí d’obair scríofa na ndaltaí ar fáil ina gcóipleabhair, agus baineann ard-chaighdeán le cuid mhaith dá gcuid saothair. Moltar anois éagsulacht sa scribhneoireacht a chur chun cinn.

- Irish is very well taught in this school. The teachers’ use of language provides pupils with an effective exemplar for modelling language. The teachers place praiseworthy emphasis on the communicative approach and as a result the pupils speak with accuracy and they utilise a wide vocabulary. The majority of pupils read fluently and they are able to discuss the content of the lessons capably. New vocabulary is very clearly taught and the content of the reading material is discussed in an appropriate way before and after the actual text is read. Very good practice is evident regarding the teaching of Irish writing in all classes. Many samples of pupils’ written work were evident in their copybooks and a very good standard is reached in the majority of this work. It is recommended that a greater variety of writing genres be developed.

- In the teaching of English, pupils’ oral language skills are comprehensively developed in this school. They speak clearly, fluently and confidently on a range of topics. Pupils utilise a wide vocabulary and very good sentence structure. The provision of increased opportunities for purposeful pupil-pupil talk would further enhance their oral language development. Very good practice was observed in the teaching of English reading and as a consequence, pupil attainment in this area is of a very high standard. The quality of pupils’ written work is highly praised. Work is neatly presented and pupils are awarded frequent opportunities to engage in personal and independent writing activities. It is recommended that the range of genres in which pupils are facilitated to write be extended.

- During the evaluation period, very good practice was observed in the teaching of Mathematics. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are utilised to very good effect as both a teaching and learning tool. Pupil attainment is of a very good standard and pupils report that they enjoy their mathematics lessons. It is recommended that increased focus be placed on oral mathematical activities and on the development of pupils’ mathematical skills.

- Pupils’ self-esteem and expressive language are very effectively developed through their engagement in purposeful drama activities. They enter enthusiastically into fictional contexts enabling them to gain knowledge and insights into the lives of other people and
to develop their personal and social skills. To ensure that all drama lessons become learning experiences, the practice of reflecting on the dramatic action and on the insights gained therein, should be further developed.

- Teachers are highly commended for the administration of standardised tests in literacy and numeracy on an annual basis and for maintaining an on-going record of pupil progress. Pupils’ written work is regularly monitored and helpful evaluative comments are noted. Teacher-designed tests are administered to ascertain pupils’ understanding of specific curriculum topics and concepts. It is now recommended that teachers extend the range of assessment modes utilised and that a means of formally recording pupil progress across all curriculum areas be developed.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is of a very good standard. Teachers effectively differentiate tasks, learning outcomes and lesson content to ensure that all pupils are engaged appropriately in the learning process. Very good individual education plans (IEPs) are prepared for pupil in receipt of support. It is recommended that a means of reporting on the progress of individual pupils in receipt of support on a monthly and termly basis be devised. Increased focus should also be placed on the organisation of early intervention programmes in the infant and junior classes.

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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

On behalf of the Board of Management, staff and school community of Loughflouder N.S. we would like to extend a sincere thank you to our inspector for the courteous and professional manner in which she carried out the Whole School Evaluation. It was a very worthwhile informative and positive experience for all of us.

We are very pleased that the very high quality of teaching and learning in the school has been recognised and also the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of our Board of Management, Principal, teachers, pupils and parents. We also welcome the acknowledgement of the very high quality of support for our pupils.

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 and teachers welcome the recommendations made by the inspector and will endeavour to work together in order to implement these recommendations as soon as possible to further enhance the standard of teaching and learning in the school.