Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Kilglass NS
Enniscrone
Co Sligo

Uimhir rolla: 15571E

Date of inspection: 02 March 2011
1. Introduction

Kilglass national school is a three-teacher, rural, co-educational school in County Sligo under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. Enrolment figures are steadily increasing with seventy pupils currently enrolled (36 boys and 34 girls). Pupil attendance is very good. During this inspection four subjects were evaluated: English, Irish, Mathematics and History. During the whole-school evaluation, the inspector observed teaching and learning in three mainstream class settings and one support teaching setting. 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 demonstrates committed and diligent support to the school.
- Communication and relationships within the school and with the wider school community are excellent.
- The parents’ association works earnestly to enhance and enrich the schooling provided for pupils.
- The principal and teachers provide high levels of commitment to the school and to the pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning overall is commended.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Individual teacher planning and recording of monthly progress practices should be reviewed.
- Moltar a thuilleadh béime a chur ar labhairt na Ghaeilge tríd an scoil.
- The oral language abilities of pupils should be further augmented through the use of a structured discrete language programme at all class levels.
- Information and communications technologies (ICT) should be further developed to support teaching and learning.
- A uniform approach to penmanship, handwriting, process writing and presentation should be adopted on a whole-school basis.

3. Quality of School Management

- The chairperson and board of management discharge their duties in a very committed, enthusiastic and professional manner. The board has outlined very commendable and clear priorities for the school’s future development. The recent acquisition and development of an all-weather astro turf pitch has provided excellent play facilities for pupils and the local community. The construction of three new classrooms, resource rooms and offices has commenced following approval from the Department of Education and Skills.
Refurbishment of the existing school building will provide much improved accommodation for pupils and teachers. The contribution of the part-time secretary and the part-time caretaker significantly benefits the work of the school.

- A strong sense of partnership applies to the in-school management team comprising the principal and deputy principal. The principal, who has long experience of the school, fosters a positive school climate, where communication is open and the members of the school community are motivated and involved in collaborative decision-making. School rolls and registers are meticulously maintained. The deputy principal undertakes a range of curricular, organisational and pastoral duties. All teachers work diligently on behalf of their pupils. It is suggested that the duties attaching to posts of responsibility be regularly reviewed to reflect evolving school needs.

- The very good relationships that exist within the school community are commendable. Interactions between school staff, pupils and their peers are positive and respectful. All pupils acknowledged that they get on well with the other children in the school. Parents are regularly updated regarding their children’s progress and school activities. A highly committed parents’ association makes valuable contributions to the school including fundraising, provision of a school prospectus and organisation of social occasions for all families. The development of a school web site will further consolidate school newsletters and communication channels. An annual report, as outlined under section 20 of Education Act 1998 would also be useful in this regard.

- The operation of a schoolbook loan scheme is highly commended. The management of the pupils is mostly very good. Almost all pupils indicated in the pupil questionnaires that they felt safe in class and in the playground and 100% of the pupils surveyed responded that they knew the school rules. All parents, in their responses to questionnaires, agreed that their children like school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Following collaboration between teachers, board of management and parents, a number of statutory policies have been established. Many have been ratified. A systematic cyclical review of policies should be undertaken. The school community is now well-positioned to engage in self-review and self-evaluation processes on curriculum and organisational matters. The document entitled “Looking at Our School” would be helpful in this regard. A whole school action plan should be undertaken with aims, targets and achievement dates.

- Teachers’ long-term classroom planning is good. It broadly reflects the breadth and balance of the curriculum, is linked to the school plan and influences teaching and learning. Short-term planning generally references the curriculum objectives, teaching methodologies, teaching resources and assessment approaches. The staff is encouraged to develop a whole-school approach that will incorporate differentiated approaches for the multi-class situation. It is also recommended that monthly progress records be reviewed to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.

- 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 and learning is generally very good. Commendable levels of pupil achievement are evident. All parents are happy overall with the school, as demonstrated in their responses to questionnaires, while all pupils consider their school to be a good school. A variety of teaching methodologies and approaches, including collaborative, pair and small group work are used to good effect. There is room to further develop information and communications technologies (ICT) in the support of teaching and learning. Greater access to ICT should be provided for pupils, over half of whom indicated that they had very little access to computers at school. The pupils’ work is regularly monitored and assessment outcomes guide teachers’ planning. Standardised tests in English reading and Mathematics are administered throughout the school in accordance with Circular Letter 0138/2006. The infant pupils are screened for indicators of early learning difficulties.

- Go ginerálta, muintear an Ghaeilge le cumas. Cuirtear béim chuí ar éisteacht agus ar labhairt, ar rannta agus ar amhráin, ar chluichí teanga agus ar roíghlacadh chun chur le fóghlaim na teanga. Cé go bhfuil cleachtas maith le sonrú i ranganna áirithe, b’fhéidir a thuilteadh béime a bhaint as trasai agus as seachtain ó sheachtain go seachtain chun leánuachaí agus forbairt a chothú i gcumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí. Cothaítear sáchanna léitheoireachta go cuí ach moltar cnuasach breise fiú leathruthaí chun espéirsí léitheoireachta nó ndaltaí a leathnú. Moltar freisin, díseáin níos léithne níos cleachtaí scribhneoireachta a chur ar fáil do ndaltaí le scribhneoireacht phearsanta de chineálacha éagsúla a chleachtaidh.

- Irish is generally taught competently. Suitable emphasis is placed on listening and speaking, on rhymes and songs, on language games and role-play to expand the learning. While instances of good practice are evident in a number of classes, it would be more beneficial for pupils if greater use was made of phrases and stories from week to week to provide continuity and development of their communicative skills. Reading skills are appropriately developed but it is recommended that a greater selection of real books be acquired to widen the reading experiences of pupils. It is also recommended that pupils be afforded more regular opportunities to engage in personal writing in different genres.

- Teaching and learning in English is of a high standard. Some very effective practices in reading and writing activities were observed during the evaluation. The pupils’ understanding of a very broad repertoire of poetry in senior classes is impressive. Most pupils display a competent command of language and demonstrate confidence in their expression of a variety of themes and opinions. Oral language abilities could be further augmented through the use of a structured discrete language programme at all class levels. Standards in reading are very good and most pupils indicated in questionnaires that they are achieving well in reading. The pupils regularly write in a variety of genres and participate in “Write-a-book” project. It is recommended that a uniform approach to penmanship, handwriting, process writing and presentation be adopted on a whole-school basis.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good and most pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the concepts taught. This is achieved through appropriate attention to the development of mathematical skills, the use of mathematical language and trails and the promotion of investigative, problem-solving approaches throughout the school. Skilful pupil and teacher questioning and structured oral and mental mathematical work contribute to pupils’ appreciation of the subject.
• Teaching and learning in History is of a very high standard across all classes. Through their work as historians in a variety of topics and activities, the pupils are enabled to develop an understanding of time and chronology, change and continuity. The pupils’ sense of identity, family and community is fostered and consolidated through story, interviews, photographic studies and projects.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

• The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good and the pupils are supported in an inclusive and purposeful learning environment. Daily records and ongoing assessments are maintained. Support is provided primarily on withdrawal basis. While some team teaching takes place with pupils in lower classes, it is recommended that further work on an in-class systematic basis be introduced throughout the school. A special needs assistant carries out his duties very diligently. The board of management, principal and staff members are sensitive to any instances of disadvantage which manifest and endeavour to be as supportive as possible of pupils who may need additional support.

Published September 2011
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

The Board commend the visiting inspector for the thoroughly professional and courteous manner in which the entire evaluation was conducted. We acknowledge her affirmation of current good practice and welcome her advice and encouragement for further development to enable us to enhance the quality of service we provide to our community.

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

1. Staff have developed a whole school template for monthly reports to be used from Sept 2011
2. Discrete time for oral language to be timetabled at all class levels for 2011/12.
3. Development of a whole school policy on penmanship/handwriting has been prioritised.
4. Completion of new classrooms will afford greater opportunity for use of I.C.T. throughout school.
5. Member of Board with expertise in this area to assist in developing a school website.