Whole School Evaluation REPORT

St Mary’s No. 2 National School
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

Uimhir rolla: 15778D

Date of inspection: 15 October 2010
1. Introduction

St Mary’s No. 2 National School is a co-educational primary school situated in Nenagh town, County Tipperary. It currently has three mainstream class teachers and sixty-nine pupils.

The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick. Pupils enrolled in the school include those from the Church of Ireland tradition, as well as pupils from other religious affiliations and from none. In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in enrolment. A significant number of these pupils come from very diverse non-English speaking backgrounds and are learning English as an additional language (EAL).

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in October 2010, which focussed on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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 fulfils its functions effectively.
- The in-school management team leads the day-to-day management of the school in an efficient, effective manner.
- The school is highly committed to inclusiveness and to managing the diverse school population in a very positive manner.
- The teachers work hard to generate supportive, attractive learning environments. A good range of teaching and learning resources is used effectively throughout lessons.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is of a very good quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- When reviewing whole-school curriculum plans, the diverse needs of pupils attending the school should be explicitly addressed. At whole-school and class levels, teachers should provide an outline of how lessons are differentiated to match pupils’ varying ability and language proficiency levels.
- Teachers should include in their plans an outline of the how the specific English language required for pupils to access the full curriculum is taught.
- Strategies to further improve the management of multi-grade teaching should be explored and implemented.
- The school is advised that, in accordance with Circular 0015/2009, there is scope for more flexible deployment of the EAL support teacher to include whole-class teaching and more extensive in-class support.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management fulfils its management functions effectively. It is evident that the board has a clear vision for the on-going development of the school. In recent years, a significant building project was undertaken and this was managed competently by the board. School accounts are certified annually. There is commitment to inclusiveness, with the considerable changes in the profile of the school’s population being addressed in a very positive manner.

- The board is advised that, in accordance with Circular 0015/2009, there is scope for more flexible deployment of the EAL support teacher to include whole-class teaching and more extensive in-class support.

- The work of the school is supported by a committed parents’ association.

- The principal and the other members of the in-school management team provide effective leadership by engaging diligently in an appropriate range of duties.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of school planning is good. A range of informative administrative policies has been prepared. It is evident that these policies are consistently implemented.

- The quality of whole-school curriculum planning is good. In Irish, English, Mathematics and SPHE the curriculum content to be addressed at each class level is outlined. All teachers prepare satisfactory long-term and short-term plans and monthly progress reports (*cuntas mhíosula*) outlining detail in relation to lesson content and methodologies. In addition, the support teachers maintain detailed daily notes of content covered as well as observations of pupils’ progress.

- The diverse needs of pupils attending the school should be explicitly addressed in whole-school plans and in teachers’ plans. At whole-school and class levels, teachers should provide an outline of how lessons are differentiated to match pupils’ ability and language proficiency levels.

- It is recommended that all teachers include in their plans an outline of how the specific English language required for pupils to access the full curriculum is taught.

- Teachers engage in good quality evaluation through on-going assessment practices, the regular correction of pupils’ work and the administration of class tests. Data yielded from standardised tests are thoroughly monitored by individual teachers as well as at whole-school level. In order to further develop the school’s capacity to self-evaluate, the in-school management team is advised to focus strongly on promoting continuous review and development of practices in teaching and learning whilst paying particular regard to supporting the needs of the school’s diverse population.

- 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 good. For the most part, lessons are well structured and well paced. Many pupils achieve good standards in their work.

- Saothraíonn na hoidí go díograiseach i múineadh na Gaeilge agus tá dul chun cinn sásúil á dhéanamh ag na daltaí i ngéithe den churaclam. Leagann na múinteoirí béim ar an gcumarsáid trí ghníomhaochtaí taitneamhacha agus tá cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí sásúil. Nior mhiste, áfach, go leagfaidh na múinteoirí béim sa bhreis ar leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn ó rang go rang, trí athbhreithniú rialta a dhéanamh ar na rainn, ar na dánta, ar na hamhráin agus ar an bhfoclóir atá fochlomtha ag na ndaltaí cheana féin. B’fhiú go mbéadh an Ghaeilge in úsáid go rialta go rith na gce achtanna, agus go neamhfhiorrúil, mar shampla mar theanga bhainistiochta ranga. Moltar freisin, go mbéadh tuilleadh aithréad chotúil sa ceachtanna chun an foclóir nua a dhaingniú. Tá réimse maith oibre scríbhneoireachta déanta ag na daltaí sna hardranganna agus baineann caighdeán maith leis an obair seo.

The teachers work diligently in the teaching of Irish and satisfactory progress is made by the pupils in aspects of the curriculum. Teachers emphasise communication through enjoyable activities and pupils’ ability to communicate is satisfactory. However, teachers should place additional emphasis on continuity and progression in pupils’ learning from class to class by regularly revising rhymes, poems, songs and vocabulary which have already been learned by the pupils. Irish should be used more continuously throughout lessons, and informally, for example as the language of classroom management. More repetition in lessons is also advised, to ensure consolidation of the new vocabulary and phrases being taught. Reading is taught effectively and some of the pupils read with understanding. The pupils in senior classes have completed a good range of written work which is of a good standard.

- English is well taught throughout the school. Pupils’ vocabulary is extended through structured language lessons based on the objectives of the curriculum. Lessons include interesting free-play and construction activities. Many pupils read with fluency and their comprehension is well developed. It is advised that more regular use of large-format books, rhymes and poetry would greatly benefit pupils. For the most part, pupils’ written work is well presented and of a good standard. In order to develop language across all curriculum areas, all teachers are advised to emphasise and explicitly teach language as a central component of lessons. The use of language experience charts to record and revise language is recommended. This would support the development of reading and writing skills as well as enhancing pupils’ language acquisition.

- Overall, Mathematics is well taught. While the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in this curriculum area, it is evident that some pupils achieve very good standards. Concrete materials and visual aids are used effectively to develop pupils’ understanding of concepts. Talk and discussion are encouraged and teachers place a good emphasis on problem solving. There is a need, in some classes for a broader range of teaching methodologies to be used. Lessons should incorporate periods of direct whole-class instruction on a single mathematical topic. This will help teachers to ensure that specific learning objectives remain the focus of lessons.
• The teaching of SPHE is good. A broad and balanced programme is taught at all class levels and the school makes appropriate arrangements for the teaching of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE). Group and pair discussion and circle-time activities are incorporated into lessons. Pupils demonstrate good ability to discuss topics.

• Questionnaires completed by parents indicate that there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

• At the senior level, exemplary practice was observed in the management of multi-grade teaching particularly in relation to the management of pupils and the structure and organisation of lessons.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Two learning support / resource teachers and an EAL teacher provide very good support to pupils in the school. Most of the support is provided in designated rooms which individual pupils and groups of pupils attend having been withdrawn from their mainstream classrooms. These rooms feature displays of pupils’ work, high-quality support materials, an abundance of visual aids and printed materials. Carefully chosen activities are undertaken, using a good range of resources, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and special programmes.

• The learning-support/resource teachers provide supplementary support to pupils with special educational needs. The teachers devise individual education plans containing clear, measurable targets. Pupils make good progress in relation to these targets.

• The EAL teacher uses the Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) materials very effectively in the course of support sessions. Some in-class support is provided in the infant room, to assist in the development of pupils’ vocabulary and to encourage socialisation. These sessions are well structured and pupils’ level of engagement is good.

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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

The Board of Management would like to thank the Inspector for her report and positive comments.

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

We appreciate the recommendations made and these are now in the process of being implemented.