Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Kilcolman National School
Kilcolman, Enniskeane, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 16259H

Date of inspection: 2 March 2011
1. Introduction

Kilcolman National School is a co-educational, rural school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. It caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class and has a central role in the community it serves. Enrolments have increased considerably and currently, there are sixty-seven pupils on roll. Attendance levels are very good and are monitored carefully. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 discharges its duties effectively and the members work conscientiously on behalf of the school.
- The principal provides effective leadership and high levels of teamwork underpin the success of the school.
- The teachers are competent, dedicated professionals who display considerable expertise in a range of areas.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is of a high standard.
- Pupils demonstrate positive dispositions to their learning and take pride in their work in response to the high expectations set by their teachers.
- Parents are involved actively in the school and provide considerable support.

The following main recommendations are made:

- In the teaching of Irish, the communicative phase of language lessons should be developed further and consideration should be given to the teaching of other aspects of the curriculum through Irish.
- Further use should be made of data arising from ongoing assessment and the monthly progress records to inform the provision of additional models of targeted in-class support and the systematic review of key aspects of curricular plans.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The chairperson convenes regular meetings and ensures that the board is actively engaged in policy development and review. Board members work conscientiously on behalf of the school. The accounts are certified and minutes are recorded carefully. The board supports the professional development of teachers. The board employs a part-time secretary and special needs assistants who contribute significantly to the school.

- The principal leads the school capably as a learning community. He has successfully established a culture of collaboration and it is apparent that high levels of teamwork underpin the success of the school. The in-school management team carries out a wide range of additional duties competently, which contribute substantially to the management of the school. They are ably supported by all of the teaching staff. To further develop curricular leadership, it is recommended that the duties attached to the posts of responsibility be reviewed formally on a regular basis.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The teachers are competent professionals who display considerable expertise in a range of areas. The school community has upgraded the building and surrounding grounds to a high standard. Impressive progress is in evidence in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for teaching and learning.

- The teachers successfully provide the pupils with a high-quality, stimulating learning environment. The very positive outcomes of both the pupils’ and parents’ questionnaires, conducted as part of this evaluation, support this finding. The pupils are highly motivated and interact with their teachers in a courteous and respectful manner.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of the school planning and self-evaluation processes is very good. Both curricular and organisational policies have been constructed carefully on a collaborative basis and have been reviewed. They provide sound guidelines for the development of effective whole-school approaches and are accessible to all partners. To enhance school self-evaluation, it is recommended that staff makes further use of assessment data to review key aspects of policy and to target specific aspects of provision for further development.

- There is clear evidence that whole-school planning impacts positively on pupils’ learning. All teachers provide carefully considered long-term and short-term planning and monthly progress records. Teachers have good strategies in place to promote linkage between policies and classroom practice and make use of an online file-sharing facility to share their classroom plans. In the interest of further development, it is recommended that more effective use be made of the information arising from monthly progress records to monitor ongoing curriculum implementation and review.

- 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 is of a high standard. The pupils demonstrate positive dispositions to their learning. They take pride in their work in response to the high expectations set by their teachers. At particular class levels, excellent print-rich materials which scaffold the development of pupils’ skills particularly in English, Irish and Mathematics are provided. It is recommended that this good practice be extended.

• Gabhann caighdeán maith le teagasc agus le foghlaim na Gaeilge. Cuireann na hoidí ionchur teanga saibhri faoi bhraid na ndaltaí go cumasach agus éirionn lena lán acu caighdeán creidiúnaí a bhaint amach. Chun cumas liofaigh de na ndaltaí a chothú a thuilleadh agus freastail níos fearr fós ar a gcuid éagsúlachtai cumais, moltar don bhfoireann an tréimhsé cumarsáide den cheacht a thabairt. B’fhéidir don bhfoireann feachaint ar ghnéithe éile den charachtar a theagasc trí Ghaeilge chun deiseanna a thabhairt do na ndaltaí a úsáid ar bhonn níos forleiththiúchán. Téann sé go mór chun tarbh d’fhoghlaim na ndaltaí go dtagtar taidh díobh cineálachacha difríúla téacsanna a léamh agus a phlé agus go gcothaitear a gcumas a thabhairt faoin scríbhneoireachta neamhspleách.

• Good standards are in evidence in the teaching and learning of Irish. The teachers ably provide the pupils with an enriched language input and many of them attain creditable standards. To improve pupils’ fluency and cater further for their varying levels of ability, teachers are advised to develop the communicative phase of language lessons. To provide pupils with extended opportunities to use the language, it is recommended that consideration be given to teaching other aspects of the curriculum through Irish. Pupils’ learning is greatly enhanced by the worthwhile opportunities given to them to read and discuss a variety of texts and to develop their independent writing skills.

• The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. The teachers make effective use of the key language contexts in the curriculum to develop pupils’ oral language skills. The pupils demonstrate a very good ability to express themselves confidently in an age-appropriate manner. Pupils are provided with a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, including class novels. Their reading and writing skills are developed carefully at all class levels and high standards are attained. The cultivation of pupils’ skills through greater development of play-based methodologies, collaborative learning approaches and the use of flexible groupings will further enhance their learning.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Purposeful whole-class teaching of concepts was observed throughout the school. This effective work included carefully constructed opportunities for pupils to practice their skills and to consolidate their learning. Pupils are provided with well-planned opportunities to engage in practical work and to apply their skills to real-life situations. Effective use of mathematical games and active-learning strategies was observed.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is very good. The teachers provide the pupils with a broad range of dramatic experiences. Carefully planned sessions with high levels of pupil participation were observed. The pupils demonstrate an impressive ability to enter into the world of drama with confidence and enthusiasm. The work is gainfully integrated with other curriculum areas, most noticeably History and English. Pupils are provided with valuable opportunities to perform publicly.
• The teachers make use of a wide range of effective assessment modes. Standardised tests are administered twice annually. The data is recorded carefully and used to inform the development of good quality profiles of individual pupil’s progress. Copybooks indicate that pupils are taught to present their work to a high standard and that their assignments are monitored carefully. Good examples of feedback for improvement which gave pupils clear guidance on where they achieved success and where they might improve were observed. It is recommended that this good practice be further developed on a whole-school basis in the context of promoting assessment for learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The support teachers work conscientiously in collaboration with mainstream teachers to provide good quality support for pupils with special educational needs. Specific targets arising from pupils’ identified learning needs are outlined clearly in individual education plans or individual pupil learning profiles, as appropriate. There is ongoing communication with parents and relevant partners. There is clear evidence of pupils benefiting from carefully structured teaching and learning sessions. Good work is ongoing in relation to formalising the implementation of the staged approach. In this context, it is recommended that the teachers make further use of data arising from ongoing assessment to inform the provision of additional models of targeted in-class support.

• The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Parents are involved actively in the school and provide considerable support. The success of the fundraising efforts of the parent committee has led to the provision of a high quality ICT infrastructure. It greatly benefits pupils’ learning that the principal and teachers organise information meetings for parents in relation to key aspects of the curriculum. The teachers make effective use of the National Council and Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) report card templates to provide parents with information regarding their children’s progress.

Published, February 2012