Whole School Evaluation REPORT

Timolin National School
Timolin, Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla: 16535F

Date of inspection: 22 March 2011
1. Introduction

Timolin National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. The school is situated in the village of Timolin, Co. Kildare. There are 30 pupils enrolled in the school, and there are two mainstream teachers. Both teachers were appointed to their positions shortly before this evaluation took place. 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 school is a focal point for the local community and provides a broad and balanced education, imbued with a Church of Ireland ethos.
- The board of management is very committed to supporting the school staff in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- The principal has made a very good start in his role and has begun a rigorous process of school self-evaluation. He has a clear vision for the future and has set realistic targets for raising standards, especially in English and Mathematics.
- A variety of effective teaching methods are used in each classroom. Teachers’ willingness to adopt new methods, with a view to improving pupil achievement, is commendable.
- A wide range of resources is used to enhance the teaching and learning process.
- Classroom libraries and the school library are well-stocked. These will play an important role in further developing an interest in reading among the pupils.
- The teaching of Physical Education (PE) is undertaken with diligence and skill.

The following main recommendations are made:

- A three-year action plan should be devised to provide a clear framework for school development planning and curriculum implementation.
- Further emphasis should be placed on raising pupils’ standards in English reading.
- The teaching of Mathematics should focus on enhancing pupils’ interest and improving overall standards of achievement.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and meets at least five times a year. The board is very committed to developing the school. As part of this commitment, the board has provided valuable support to the principal in school self-evaluation and school planning. The board of management is concerned about the future of the school, which
fulfils an important role as a focal point for the local Church of Ireland community. The school’s accounts are audited annually by an accountant.

- The school has a newly-appointed principal, who has made a very good start in his post. He is committed to raising educational standards in the school and to providing a broad and balanced education for each pupil. Since his appointment, the principal has placed a strong emphasis on self-evaluation to identify the strengths of the school and the areas for development. In particular, he is aware of the crucial importance of raising standards in English and Mathematics.

- The principal receives valuable support in managing the day-to-day running of the school from the special-duties teacher.

- The school has invested in a wide range of educational resources and teaching aids to enhance the learning process for pupils. The new interactive whiteboards, for example, are effectively used to motivate pupils and to make activities and lessons more interesting.

- The school has a parent-teacher association. Parents are very interested in playing an active role in school life. Parents’ representatives welcome the recent improvement in communication between the school staff and parents. The results of parent questionnaires indicate overall satisfaction with the running of the school and the education provided.

- Credit is due to the newly-appointed principal for prioritising pupil behaviour in the school. Each teacher has developed effective classroom-management strategies and these have ensured that pupils are well-behaved. Pupil questionnaires indicate that almost all pupils are very happy with the school and they feel that they are receiving a very good education.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school planning and self-evaluation process has many positive aspects. Much worthwhile work has been done on reviewing the school plan since the appointment of the new principal. Commendable school self-evaluation strategies have been used to identify areas for development. It is recommended that a three-year action plan be devised, as a means of structuring the further renewal of the school plan. As new and revised school policies are ratified, it is recommended that they be signed by the chairperson of the board of management and that a date for review be specified.

- The quality of individual teacher planning is good. Each teacher regularly prepares long-term and short-term schemes of work. Monthly progress records are maintained. Appropriate individual plans are prepared for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

- 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

- There are many positive aspects to teaching, learning and pupil achievement in this school. School self-evaluation has already identified priority areas for development: improving standards in English reading and Mathematics and a greater emphasis on differentiation.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good overall. A positive attitude towards the language is fostered in each class. The teachers understand the importance of developing pupils’ oral-language skills. It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on teaching basic sentences to ensure that pupils can express themselves clearly and articulately. Overall the quality of Irish reading is good from second class onwards. Pupils are given regular opportunities to practise functional and creative writing in Irish.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English has many positive aspects. Overall, however, there is scope for development in this work. There is a need, for example, to make the raising of standards in English reading a priority at each class level. While there are well-stocked libraries in each classroom and a good start has been made in developing a print-rich environment in each classroom, a variety of approaches will be required to enhance pupils’ interest in reading. The structure of reading lessons needs to be reviewed to include, for example, more regular teacher modelling and greater emphasis on discussing and exploring new vocabulary. Much good work is covered in English writing, although there is a need to focus more on neatness and presentation.

- There are positive aspects to teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics. Overall, however, Mathematics needs to receive greater attention, with a view to increasing pupils’ interest in Mathematics and raising attainment levels. Overall, pupils show good mastery of number facts (tables). Many pupils demonstrate good problem-solving ability. There is a need, however, to further develop pupils’ problem-solving skills at each class level. The further development of a Mathematics-rich environment should assist in enhancing the status of Mathematics throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Physical Education (PE) is very good. Lessons are very well-structured. Teachers provide a broad and balanced programme of PE, ensuring that each strand of the curriculum is covered diligently and skilfully. Pupils clearly enjoy participating in the wide variety of activities, exercises and games organised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Much good work has been done in re-organising the learning-
support and resource classroom to provide an attractive and stimulating learning environment. There is a need, however, to revise the structure of some lessons to ensure more effective pupil participation and to further enhance pupil learning. It is recommended that assessment procedures be reviewed, placing more emphasis on diagnostic testing and the identification of more specific learning targets for each pupil.

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