Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Peter’s NS
Dromiskin, Co. Louth
Uimhir rolla: 16760M

Date of inspection: 23 September 2011
1. Introduction

St Peter’s National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. It serves the village of Dromiskin within the parish of Darver and Dromiskin. Enrolment for the current school year is 216 pupils. Pupil attendance levels are good. 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:

- Among the school community there is a strong sense of a shared purpose towards providing pupils with a good quality education characterised by the attainment of high standards and the implementation of a wide range of rich learning experiences.

- All teachers interact with pupils in an affirming manner creating a positive and supportive learning environment.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish and Science is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- For older pupils, the link between the support and the mainstream setting needs to become stronger particularly in terms of the development of literacy skills through other curriculum areas.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board is correctly constituted; it meets very regularly and performs its functions effectively. A strong spirit of collaboration and a sense of shared purpose characterise the work of this board. In order to develop its role with regard to teaching and learning, it is suggested that an examination of trends in pupil achievement, as derived from standardised test results and other assessments, be included in the agenda of board meetings on a periodical basis.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team comprising the principal, the deputy principal and three special-duties teacher is very good. Each member of the in-school management team, under the effective leadership of the school principal, has clearly-identified responsibilities which involve curriculum co-ordination and which contribute to the development of teaching and learning within the school.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good with a broad range of resources available to and appropriately used by teachers. The school building is in good condition and very well maintained.
• The quality of the management of relationships with the parent community is very good with parents having a role in both fundraising and policy development. In a questionnaire distributed to all parents during the school inspection, all parents expressed satisfaction with the quality of education being provided by the school for their children.

• The quality of the management of pupils’ behaviour is very good with effective routines in place to ensure the ordered running of the school and the creation of a positive and stimulating learning environment for pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. Key organisational policies required by legislation such as an enrolment and admissions policy and a code of behaviour are in place. There is a need, however, in the school’s enrolment policy, for the criteria with regard to the allocation of school places in the event of over-subscription to be more clearly delineated. Other organisational policies are sufficiently comprehensive and are impacting positively on school life.

• Curriculum plans are successful in providing an overview of the implementation of each curriculum area within the school. However, to optimise their usefulness to teachers, it is recommended that future reviews of curriculum plans focus on documenting practices specific to the school.

• An effective process of self-evaluation around identifying priorities for teaching and learning is in place and this process is successful in leading to the development of school practices.

• The quality of teachers’ planning is good, being sufficiently detailed and clearly written. The delineation of long-term plans into time-bound units is evident in some teachers’ practice and is recommended as a practice to be adopted by all teachers. The effectiveness of short-term planning would be enhanced through the identification of specific learning objectives for more able pupils in Mathematics. A common template for monthly progress records which would document content under the strand units of the curriculum is advocated.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

• Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go han-mhaith. I ngach ceacht a breathnaitheadh le linn na cigireachta, bhí struchtúr cinnte ag gabháil leis an gceacht agus sollíreacht ag baint leis an ábhar foghlama. I roinnt ranganna moltar go mbeadh suasasal ag na daltaí éisteacht le níos mó den Ghaeilge labhartha le linn na ceachtanna. Forbraítear foclóir na ndaltaí go breá tríd an scoil. Tá solúbthacht agus saibhreas le feiceáil in úsáid an fhoclóra seo. Léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint mhaithe ar raon leathan brithra agus ar a n-úsáid i gcéart i raon suiomhanna cumarsáide. Tá scileanna na réamhléitheoireachta á bhforbairt go breá le lúiseoidí, luaschartaí agus abairtí simplí á léamh. Tóisc go bhfuil ag eirí go breá leis na daltaí sa léithriúreacht Ghaeilge, b’fhéidir taithí léithriúreacht a ndaltaí a shaibhriú trí fíorleabhair agus leabhair mhóra a chur ar fáil...
The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. In every lesson observed during the course of the inspection there was a definite structure to the lesson and clarity with regard to the learning objectives. In some classes it is recommended that pupils have an opportunity to hear more spoken Irish during lessons. Pupils’ vocabulary is effectively developed throughout the school. There is flexibility and richness to be seen in the use of this vocabulary. The pupils display a good understanding of a broad range of verbs and their correct use in a range of communicative settings. Pre-reading skills are well developed through the reading of captions, flash-cards and simple sentences. Because pupils are succeeding well with Irish reading, it would be worth enriching pupils’ reading experience through making novels and large-format books available and to teach lessons based on these. Pupils display good ability when they engage in writing; they use a sufficiently broad vocabulary and a variety of verbs. The majority of pupils display a very good ability to structure sentences correctly.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. Pupils have very good oral language skills. Story, poetry, debate, drama, project presentations and an annual public speaking competition are examples of effective approaches used by the school in providing for good quality oral language development. The attainment of pupils in reading is very good. The successful teaching of phonological awareness is accompanied by the development of grapho-phonemic skills and social sight vocabulary in a balanced manner. Progress through an individualised reading scheme is carefully monitored while a class reading programme and class novels provide effectively for discussion and the development of comprehension skills. The quality of pupils’ independent writing skills is very good. As pupils progress through the school they demonstrate a good knowledge of punctuation and an increasing ability to structure their writing coherently. To progress the good quality work already evident in the senior classes, clearly-focused, systematic skill development should underpin pupils’ independent writing.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. The mathematics curriculum is being taught in a broad and balanced manner. Teachers are successful in situating concepts in the context of pupils’ own experiences. In all classes, pupils demonstrated a good ability to answer questions posed orally during the inspection. It is recommended that lessons which focus on developing computational skills be more effectively differentiated to accommodate the needs of more able pupils. Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance pupils’ learning.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is very good. Lessons are appropriately challenging and taught effectively through the judicious use of first-hand experiences and concrete, visual and ICT resources. Teacher questioning is very effective in stimulating and probing pupils’ thinking. Participation in the Green Schools Programme and Discover Primary Science adds richness to pupils’ learning and lends it a practical application. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of what they have learned in Science.

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Lessons are structured correctly and taught clearly. Pupils engage well and their attainment levels are very good.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Specific and worthwhile learning targets underpin lesson activities and these activities correlate with pupil needs. Teaching is affirming and well paced. To optimise learning for pupils, it is suggested that pupils be encouraged to record their attainment at the end of each activity in their lessons so they can see, on a day by day basis, the progress they are making. For older pupils, the link between the support and the mainstream setting needs to become stronger particularly in terms of the development of literacy skills through curriculum areas other than English.

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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 and staff of St. Peter’s N.S, Dromiskin, wish to acknowledge the professional, thorough and cooperative manner in which the WSE was carried out in our school. During the course of the evaluation the inspector established an excellent rapport with staff, pupils, Board of Management and Parents’ Committee, marked by courtesy and respect but also a comprehensive inspection of the work carried out in the school.

We are extremely pleased with the positive report and are delighted it affirms the very good practice in our school. It recognises the strengths of St. Peter’s; the pupils’ interest in learning, the commitment of the staff, the supportive role of parents and the Parents’ Association and the effectiveness of the Board in managing the school.

**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 and staff of St. Peter’s NS welcomes the advice and any recommendations contained in the WSE report.

At Board and staff meetings the report has been analysed closely and recommendations in curricular, administrative and organisational areas of school planning are being and will be addressed in a collaborative manner going forward.