Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Kiltealy National School
Kiltealy, County Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 16833N

Date of inspection:  13th December 2010
1. Introduction

Kiltealy National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. It provides education for pupils from junior infants to sixth class in a multi-grade setting and serves pupils from both the local village and the rural hinterland. The attendance of the 82 pupils is excellent. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The pro-active board of management is very supportive of the school.
- The highly-organised principal's leadership style promotes a school climate that is characterised by positive working relationships.
- The conscientious teachers demonstrate the characteristics of reflective practitioners.
- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is very good.
- The teachers make effective use of the locality to promote and develop the pupils’ enquiry skills in History.
- The school is commended on the impact of its E-Learning policy with competent and effective use made of ICT by all teachers.
- A strong sense of community spirit is palpable amongst the school’s stakeholders.
- The pupils are commended on their excellent behaviour and on their positive attitudes towards learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school plan for writing should be revised to facilitate both a cyclical approach to genres and pupils’ redrafting of their work in the light of formative feedback.
- To promote whole-school development, it is timely to review the curriculum leadership roles of the special duties teachers.
- Mainstream teachers should enhance the provision for differentiated learning and for collaborative learning activities.
3. Quality of School Management

- The pro-active board of management is highly supportive of the school. Having recently completed a school extension to facilitate special education needs (SEN) teaching, the board remains concerned about the lack of indoor facilities for physical education lessons. To ensure that all parents are informed of its work, it is recommended that the board publish an annual report.

- The principal’s highly effective organisational skills enable her to balance her fulltime class-teaching role with her leadership and management responsibilities. Her leadership style promotes a culture of teamwork and the school climate is characterised by a spirit of collegiality and positive working relationships. She is well supported by a highly-committed in-school management team who meet with her regularly. In accordance with Circular 07/03, it is timely to review their specific roles to facilitate curriculum leadership in addition to organisational and pastoral responsibilities. The school is commended on implementing a comprehensive mentoring system for new teachers. The approachable and capable school secretary contributes significantly to the smooth and efficient operation of the school.

- The school provides an attractive and well-organised learning environment with some classrooms hosting exemplary displays. The well-maintained school grounds incorporate a well-tended school garden. A good range of resources is available to both support and enhance teaching and learning. The conscientious classroom assistant ably supports the pupils’ learning in the infant and junior classes.

- The management of pupils is very good. The teachers are clearly committed to their general welfare and cultivate a caring and mutually-respectful atmosphere throughout the school. The pupils are commended on their excellent behaviour and on their positive attitudes towards learning. As reflected in pupil questionnaires, consideration should be given to enabling them to participate in relevant decision-making through an appropriate forum.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is good. The comprehensive school plan encompasses relevant curriculum, organisational and administrative policies. Policies are ratified by the board and provision is made for their systematic review. As indicated by parent questionnaire responses, it is recommended that parents be afforded a more collaborative role in future revisions to pertinent policies.

- The quality of teachers’ individual planning is good. To facilitate both breadth and balance in the delivery of the curriculum, all teachers produce complementary long-term and short-term plans. In the best instances, these are informed by explicit learning objectives and make provision for differentiation.

Child protection policy and procedures
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 standard of teaching and learning is good with some very good practice observed. The teachers present well-structured, well-paced lessons that, in the best instances, are informed by explicit, shared learning objectives. Some provision is made for both scaffolded, discovery learning and collaborative investigative activities. As reflected in the pupils' questionnaires, it is recommended that this good practice be extended. Teaching primarily comprises competent whole-class teaching and consideration should now be given to extending the provision for differentiated learning. The pupils are generally encouraged to take care with the presentation of their work and it is advised that the teachers adopt a cohesive approach to both presentation and marking. The school is commended on the impact of its E-Learning policy with competent and effective use made of ICT in all mainstream and SEN settings.

- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. The teachers make effective use of a wide range of strategies and resources to stimulate the pupils' interest and promote their language usage. Listening skills are developed through the use of songs, rhymes and games. The pupils exhibit a positive attitude toward the language and demonstrate very good levels of oral competence particularly in the infant and senior classes. The pupils read with fluency and show good levels of comprehension. Due emphasis is placed on the acquisition of grammar. The teachers make effective use of modelled and shared writing to promote the pupils' writing skills. They enable them to produce independent work of a good quality.

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is good and some very good practice was observed. Teachers make provision for the development of oral language skills and most pupils express themselves confidently. A solid foundation in reading skills is laid in the infant classes. As they progress through the school, the pupils display varying reading abilities and provision should be made for the explicit teaching of specific reading skills to differentiated reading groups. The effective use of class libraries and of class novels encourages the pupils to engage with, and respond to literature. The teachers provide regular opportunities for both shared and independent writing in various genres. Due regard is paid to the teaching of spelling and grammar. To further enhance writing quality, it is recommended that genres be explored in a cyclical manner and that pupils be enabled to redraft their work in the light of formative feedback.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. All teachers present well-structured lessons and link mathematical concepts to the pupils' everyday environment. Some excellent use is made of the local environment to facilitate mathematical trails. To further enhance the pupils' understanding of new concepts, consideration should be given to extending the usage of manipulatives and to enhancing the provision for scaffolded learning. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the acquisition of number facts and on mental arithmetic. Pupils are encouraged to use the language of
mathematics which is supported through classroom displays. As they display varying abilities, particularly in the strand of number, it is recommended that the provision for differentiation both within and across the multi-grade class settings be extended.

- The standard of teaching and learning in history is very good. All teachers present lively and engaging lessons that place appropriate emphasis on promoting and developing the pupils’ investigative skills. The planned programme makes good provision for continuity and progression in the various curriculum strands. All classrooms host appropriate time lines. Throughout the school, highly effective use is made of the local community, the environment and artefacts as sources of evidence and the pupils display impressive knowledge of local history. The pupils are enabled to engage in project work related to peoples, eras and cultures of the past.

- All teachers employ a range of strategies and tools to monitor their pupils’ attainment. Most teachers mark their pupils work very regularly and there is some evidence of the provision of constructive feedback. The school should consider using assessment data to enhance the provision for differentiated learning. Appropriate strategies are in place to inform parents of their children’s progress.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school policy, which accommodates the staged approach, makes appropriate provision for early intervention. The SEN model incorporates both in-class support and withdrawal. The SEN team employs a suitable range of diagnostic tests, in addition to feedback from both teachers and parents, to inform individual education plans. The teachers present engaging, well-paced and well-resourced lessons that are tailored to the pupils’ individual needs. They liaise effectively with the mainstream teachers and make appropriate provision to meet with parents. The withdrawal settings are well-organised and aesthetically-pleasing learning environments.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good and a strong sense of community spirit is palpable amongst the school’s stakeholders. The compact nature of the school community greatly facilitates informal communication with the parent body. The school has also established an appropriate range of procedures to facilitate formal communication with parents.

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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 wishes to thank the Inspector for her courtesy and professionalism regarding the manner in which the W.S.E. was carried out. We also thank her for recognising and acknowledging the excellent teamwork, collegiality and positive environment in the school. The high standards of teaching and learning were also noted.

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 are actively working on implementing the recommendations of the Inspector.