1. Introduction

St. Patrick’s NS is a co-educational, rural primary school about 5 kilometres from Waterford City. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. There are currently 146 pupils enrolled and attendance rates are very 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:

- The board of management, the parents and the parents’ association are strongly committed to supporting the work of the school.
- The principal is highly commended for her dedication to the school and for the successful promotion of a culture of teamwork and partnership.
- The staff of the school is committed, hardworking and dedicated to supporting the pupils.
- The pupils are managed effectively and are confident and positive in their learning.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commendable.
- Praiseworthy support is provided for pupils with special educational needs.

The following main recommendations are made:

- In English, the timeframe for the introduction of formal reading to infant pupils should be reviewed to allow for the implementation of a broader pre-reading programme, and a whole school approach to the writing process should be developed.
- While some early intervention and prevention programmes are implemented in infant classes, the current models should be developed further with more appropriate targeting of support.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management works effectively to support the school. Board members are commended for their commitment to the continued development of the school. They play an important role in the development of school policies and ensure that there is compliance with relevant guidelines and legislation.
- The hardworking and effective principal is highly commended for her dedication to the school. She has succeeded in fostering a culture of teamwork and partnership amongst all members of the school community. She promotes a culture of open communication and collaborative decision-making amongst the staff. She is ably supported by the deputy principal who attends to her duties with care and commitment. The regular review of duties is advised.
• The school is well presented and maintained and a positive learning environment is provided for the pupils. A wide range of resources is available to the teachers and they are used effectively to support teaching and learning.

• The school is characterised by the welcoming atmosphere extended to all. Effective procedures have been developed to ensure regular and meaningful communication with parents and the wider community. The recently launched website will enhance this further. The parents, along with the parents’ association, provide valuable, practical and financial support to the school, and are encouraged to participate in many school events and activities. The parent questionnaires demonstrate that almost all parents feel welcomed in the school and all are happy with the school.

• The pupils are managed effectively and are cooperative and courteous. They are confident and positive in their learning. The questionnaires administered to pupils demonstrate that most pupils are happy in their school and all feel that it is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of school planning is good. A range of curricular plans and organisational policies has been developed collaboratively, and they reflect the context of the school.

• The school has begun to engage in school self-evaluation, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy. To augment this process, specific targets for improvement should be developed and suitable action plans generated to address these priorities.

• All teachers provide both long-term and short-term planning to guide and support their work, and monthly progress records are maintained carefully.

• 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

• The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commendable. A wide variety of successful teaching methods is used at each class level to enhance the learning process. The pupils are given regular opportunities to work collaboratively, and there is creative use of ICT. The teachers are commended for maintaining stimulating learning environments and for the attractive displays of pupil work.

• The pupils' learning is monitored carefully using an appropriate variety of assessment strategies. The school has recently begun analysis of standardised test results and the data are being used beneficially to inform development needs in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

• Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith agus tugtar faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go diograiseach. Leagtar béim chuí ar fhORBairt scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí i nGaeilge agus tá sé ar chúmhas roinnnt mhaith dóibh abairtí a chumadh agus cumarsáid chruinn a dheánamh sa teanga. Leagtar béim inmholtar ar ról imirt agus obair bheirte. Cleachtar an léitheoireacht go rialta agus léirionn na daltaí
The quality of teaching and learning of Irish is good and the teaching of Irish is undertaken diligently. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing the pupils’ speaking skills in all classes and many of them are capable of structuring sentences and communicating accurately in the language. Commendable emphasis is placed on role play and pair work. Regular reading opportunities are provided and the pupils demonstrate good understanding of their reading material. Some worthwhile written work is undertaken. It is recommended that further creative writing opportunities be provided.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. There is purposeful oral language development at all levels and the pupils are confident communicators. They engage with a wide range of reading materials and the majority of pupils read confidently. However, it is recommended that the timeframe for the introduction of formal reading to infant pupils is reviewed to allow for the implementation of a broader pre-reading programme. Very good use of class novels was observed in some classes during the evaluation, but their use should be extended. The pupils write regularly in a variety of genres and their work is displayed purposefully. However, a whole school approach to the writing process would further enhance the quality.

- The school is commended for the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics. Lessons are well structured and the pupils are given regular opportunities to use appropriate manipulatives in the development of new concepts. All teachers are cognisant of the importance of mathematical language. In most classes, suitable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic and on the development of number facts. While the area of problem solving is prioritised in some classes, this should be developed across the school.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. The pupils display a positive interest in the subject and speak confidently about the topics covered. They participate actively and knowledgeably in lessons and their scientific skills are developed through well-structured activities involving prediction, hands-on approaches and discovery learning. Commendable examples of effective integration of Science with other curricular areas were noted in some classrooms. The school’s recent involvement in the Green Schools initiative is praised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Praiseworthy support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate programmes are planned carefully to take account of the pupils’ individual learning needs and to ensure that they are participating in their learning. There is close consultation between the support teachers and the class teachers, and the progress of individual pupils is tracked systematically. While some early intervention and prevention programmes are implemented, the current models should be developed further with more appropriate targeting of support teaching at infant level. The staged approach to learning support, as outlined in DES Circular 02/05, should be consolidated further amongst class teachers.

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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 acknowledges the professional, efficient and courteous manner in which the WSE was carried out. It welcomes and accepts the inspector’s report and is pleased that the report affirms the positive work being done by the Staff, Board of Management, Parents’ Association and Pupils.

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 thank the inspector for her help and advice. We have begun to implement her recommendations.