Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Clongeen NS
Clongeen, Foulksmills, County Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 16992K

Date of inspection: 08 December 2011
1. Introduction

Clongeen NS. is a seven-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school with a current enrolment of 116 pupils. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. Attendance levels in the school are excellent. 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 and parents’ association are highly supportive of the school.
- The quality of the physical environment of the school is very good. All classrooms are well resourced and these resources are employed effectively by the teachers to support teaching and learning.
- The principal and the teaching staff are commended for their commitment to the school and the welfare of the pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Teachers should plan for the varying ability levels of their pupils and provide greater differentiation of the curriculum to meet their needs.
- The use of a broader range of reading texts in English and Irish is advised.
- Current models of support for pupils with special educational needs should be extended to include increased levels of group teaching, team-teaching and in-class provision.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted properly and is committed to the care and welfare of all the pupils in the school. Clearly defined responsibilities are allocated to individual board members and are undertaken diligently for the benefit of the school. To optimise the contribution of the board, it is advised that the board supports the principal in the strategic management of the school.

- The principal is thoroughly familiar with the community of the school. She leads the whole-school planning process and promotes a culture of teamwork. She attends to the management and administration of the school in a conscientious manner. She is supported by the deputy principal and the special duties teacher, who carry out their duties diligently. The planned review of the duties is opportune and it is advised that their curriculum leadership roles be strengthened.
• Good relations exist between the school, the parents and the wider community. The school has a highly committed parents' association that makes a significant contribution to the learning experiences of the pupils by providing a range of resources. The proposed involvement of parents in supporting curriculum areas is welcomed. In the parent questionnaires, most parents report that the school is welcoming of them.

• The quality of the school building and grounds is very good. All classrooms are well resourced and the teachers employ these resources effectively to advance the pupils' learning. Almost all parents are of the view that the facilities in the school are good.

• The management of the pupils’ behaviour and their participation in learning is good. Analysis of the pupil questionnaires indicates that they feel secure and confident in their learning environment.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• Overall, the quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is good. Plans for all areas of the curriculum and a range of organisational policies have been devised collaboratively by the principal and the teaching staff, in consultation with the board of management. A commendable action plan ensures a cyclical approach to policy review. While the curricular plans offer guidance there is a need to offer greater direction to the teachers as to how to mediate the curriculum at each class level.

• The quality of classroom planning is good. The planning offers guidance to the teaching and learning taking place in the classrooms and demonstrates that a wide and varied curriculum is being presented. While the planning includes some reference to differentiation, more specific attention should be given to the expected learning outcomes to be achieved by pupils of varying ability levels. Progress records are maintained dutifully.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

• The quality of teaching and learning is good. Suitable teaching strategies and methodologies are successfully employed to maximise pupil participation. Classrooms provide stimulating environments that are rich in print and number. Samples of pupils’ work are attractively displayed. Praiseworthy efforts are made to enhance lessons through active learning strategies such as the use of games and the manipulation of materials. The atmosphere in classrooms is positive and interactions between teachers and pupils are encouraging and supportive. All teachers employ a range of strategies and tools to monitor their pupils’ attainment. The teachers also mark their pupils work very regularly and constructive feedback is offered. The school should consider using assessment data to enhance the provision for differentiated learning. Parental questionnaire responses indicate that almost all parents are happy with the quality of teaching in the school. The responses to the pupil questionnaire confirm that most pupils consider that their lessons are interesting and that their teachers explain things clearly.
In general, the teaching of Irish is of a satisfactory standard. Due emphasis is placed on the use of a wide range of learning approaches. Resources such as charts, drama and technology are used productively to teach the language to the pupils. Further opportunities should be provided for pupils to develop their communication skills. Textbooks are the main resource for the teaching of Irish reading and the majority of the pupils read with appropriate fluency. Some pupils find the books too difficult and it is recommended that the reading material be differentiated to match the ability levels of the pupils. The pupils are provided with some opportunities to write independently and this good practice should be extended.

The overall provision for English is good. The pupils have regular opportunities to develop their oral language skills and the majority of pupils can express their views with suitable confidence and competence. Well-managed discussions extend pupils’ thinking skills. A variety of approaches is implemented appropriately to promote reading skills. In general, there is a satisfactory standard of reading and the majority of pupils read with assurance at each class level. Differentiated programmes of work for those pupils experiencing difficulty with reading are advised. It is also advised that the pupils be exposed to a broader range of reading texts. The pupils are provided with opportunities to write in a variety of genres and this work is displayed attractively in the classrooms. The quality of the pupils’ penmanship and handwriting is praised.

The quality of teaching in Mathematics is very good and a broad and balanced programme is delivered. In the main, the pupils demonstrate suitable understanding of mathematical content previously addressed and most pupils surveyed report that they are achieving well. A mathematics-rich environment is in evidence in all classrooms. The teachers promote the use of suitable mathematical language consistently throughout the school. Lessons are well designed and are presented competently.

The quality of teaching and learning in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very good with a varied and interesting curriculum being presented to the pupils. Drama and role-plays are used effectively to stimulate pupils to reflect on various situations responsibly. At a whole-school level there are a number of features that make an important contribution to the overall implementation of the SPHE programme. These include school assemblies, the promotion of sports and games and healthy lunches.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

While some good practice was observed in the support settings, there is scope for development in aspects of the provision. As a first step, it is advised that the Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy be reviewed to ensure that the continuum of support is implemented. Individual education plans (IEPs) and individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) have been formulated for all pupils in receipt of additional support. In some instances the learning targets are broad and general in nature. The proposed
improvement in the range of screening and diagnostic tests will contribute to the identification and review of more specific learning targets to be achieved by pupils.

- Much of the supplementary teaching takes place on a withdrawal basis, either individually or in groups. It is noted that the pupils in receipt of low incidence hours are withdrawn almost exclusively on a one-to-one basis. It is recommended that opportunities for the pupils to learn in company with, rather than separate from their peers, be maximised. This can be achieved by extending the models of support to include group teaching, team-teaching and in-class provision, always ensuring that the pupils’ identified needs are planned for appropriately.

- Learning resources are employed effectively in the support settings and pupils are active in their learning. The SEN teachers engage in continuous professional development.

Published May 2012.