1. Introduction

St. Ibar’s National School, Clohamon is a three-teacher co-educational primary school in the parish of Kilrush, Co. Wexford. The Catholic Bishop of Ferns is patron. Twenty-four pupils are enrolled in two mainstream classrooms from infants to sixth, and attendance is very good. 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 board of management is highly committed to whole-school improvement.
- The principal attends to school administration in a conscientious manner. She has developed positive working relations with staff, board of management, parents and pupils.
- A creditable action plan which ensures a cyclical approach to policy review is in place.
- Teachers and pupils interact respectfully. Pupils are proud of their school and are eager to display their talents.
- The teaching of Mathematics is generally good.
- Well-managed team-teaching lessons target all strands of the English curriculum on a cyclical basis and are used beneficially to support all pupils.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management ratifies, signs and dates all policies. Further involvement of parents in the formulation of these policies is also recommended.
- It is necessary to ensure that long-term planning is specific to the actual classes for which it is intended. Particular emphasis should be placed on delineating learning objectives and teaching methodologies with less emphasis on textbooks when organising classroom plans.
- The assessment policy should be used to ensure a systematic whole-school approach to the assessment and recording of pupils’ progress. An analysis of these assessment results should be undertaken so that differentiated provision can become integral to each teacher’s planning.
- In particular, differentiated programmes of work should be provided for those pupils experiencing difficulties with reading.
- The development of the teachers’ capacity to implement all aspects of the Music curriculum should be prioritised. Teachers should provide a designated music area in all classes to augment pupils’ understanding of the Music curriculum.
- A review of learning-support targets is recommended to ensure their compliance with curriculum guidelines and the school plan. These targets should relate more specifically to the identified needs of individual pupils. Learning-support, short-term plans should be based on these identified needs.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and conducts regular meetings. More detailed minutes of these meetings are advised. Accounts are audited in line with Section 18(1) of the Education Act 1998. The board is highly committed to whole-school improvement. Board members avail of training provided by the Catholic Primary School Managers’ Association.

- The principal prioritises the implementation of the school’s vision where each pupil’s potential can be realised in a holistic way. She has developed positive working relations with staff, the board of management, parents and pupils. She attends to the management and administration of the school in a conscientious manner. The expansion and implementation of the school plan is a high priority. The deputy principal’s duties are reviewed regularly to meet the changing needs of the school. This contributes effectively to building and sustaining a positive school climate.

- Parents support the work of the school and are actively involved in fundraising to purchase relevant resources to enhance learning opportunities for pupils. They are kept up-to-date on policy development and review. Annual parent-teacher meetings and end-of-year reports inform parents of their child’s progress. Consideration should be given to developing a parents’ association. Results of the parent questionnaire indicate that most parents feel welcome in the school and all parents feel that their child is treated fairly.

- Teachers and pupils interact respectfully. Pupils are proud of their school and are eager to display their talents. Teachers acknowledge and praise pupils’ efforts regularly.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and self-evaluation is satisfactory. Policy development is discussed regularly at board meetings. A commendable action plan which ensures a cyclical approach to policy review is in place. It is recommended that the board ratifies, signs and dates all school policies. Further involvement of parents in the formulation of school policies is also recommended.

- Curriculum plans reflect the requirements of the primary school curriculum and the needs of the school. Organisational plans offer a constructive basis for the day-to-day management of the school. It is recommended that the assessment policy be used to ensure a systematic whole-school approach to the assessment and recording of pupils’ progress.

- All teachers provide long-term and short-term plans. It is necessary to ensure that long-term planning is specific to the actual classes for which it is intended. Particular emphasis should be placed on delineating learning objectives and teaching methodologies with less emphasis on textbooks when organising classroom plans. An analysis of assessment results should be undertaken so that differentiated provision can become integral to each teacher’s planning. In this regard, the benefits of using common planning templates should be explored.

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 quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teacher-directed, whole-class teaching is the predominant methodology with some good use of group and pair work. It is recommended that varied methodologies and differentiated approaches be used consistently in each classroom so that pupils’ active, collaborative, and independent learning and problem-solving skills are nurtured and developed. Some well-paced lessons along with an appreciation and affirmation of the contributions of all pupils, and skilful higher-order questioning complements the good work observed. Bright, print-rich classrooms provide supportive learning environments.

- Tugann an cló Gaeilge i dtimpeallacht na scoile an-tacaíocht do chur i bhfeidhm an churaclaim i ngach rang. Comhtháthítear an Ghaeilge go géarchúisí mar gnáthteanga i rith an lae i ngach rang. Baintear úsáid forleathan as áiseanna éagsúla, maraon leis an mbord idirghníomhach, chun na ceachtanna a tholg. De gnáth, forbraítear scileanna na ndáltaí san éisteacht agus san labhart tríd an mhodh díreach. Forbraítear an léitheoireacht go héifeachtach i ngach rang. Tá an scríbhneoireacht bunaithe ar na leabhair saothair atá in úsáid agus déantar go héifeachtach í. Tá sé oiriúnach anois go bhforbrófaí an scríbhneoireacht theidhmíúil agus an scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach, go mór mhor sna hardranganna.

A print-rich environment supports the effective implementation of the Irish curriculum. Irish is integrated meaningfully throughout the day in all classes. A wide variety of resources, including the interactive whiteboard extend lessons. In general, pupils’ oral and listening skills are developed through teacher-led methodologies. Pupils’ reading skills are suitably fostered at each class level. Written work, based on the workbook in use, is competently undertaken. It is now timely that functional and creative writing opportunities be increased, particularly in the senior classes.

- The overall provision for English is satisfactory. A print-rich environment adds to the learning atmosphere. 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 difficulties with reading are advised. Pupils’ oral language skills are consistently prioritised and they communicate confidently. Well-managed discussions extend pupils’ thinking skills. Structured, well-paced lessons are aspects of good practice observed. The extension of this good practice to all classes is advised. Due emphasis is placed on the development of writing skills where a high standard is evident. Pupils write for a variety of audiences in a variety of genres at all class levels and this work is nicely displayed. Pupil questionnaires indicate that many pupils think they are doing well at reading.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is generally good. Pupils are exposed to a broad range of work across the strands and they display a keen interest in developing their mathematical skills and the majority are achieving well in this curriculum area. They are accurate at computation work and they can discuss, analyse and solve a range of mathematical problems. Due emphasis is placed on mental Mathematics, on language development and on estimation. A mathematics-rich environment, along with the consistent use of resources, reinforces concepts taught. Pupil questionnaires indicate that many pupils feel they are doing well at mathematics.
• All strands of the Music curriculum are appropriately represented and pupils are exposed to a wide selection of music. Due attention is paid to the teaching of musical literacy, listening and responding, and performing in all classes. All pupils learn a musical instrument and they play with increasing competence as they progress through the school. An external tutor has responsibility for implementing the Music curriculum with class teachers having input into the performance strand. The provision for Music education in this manner means that class teachers have limited opportunity to develop their teaching skills in this area. It is recommended that the school prioritises the development of the teachers’ capacity to implement all aspects of the Music curriculum. The provision of a designated music area in all classes to augment pupils’ understanding of the Music curriculum is recommended.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• There is a concerted approach to support for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils participate in well-managed activities on a withdrawal basis. They are further supported by twice-weekly team teaching sessions. These well-structured lessons are used beneficially to support all pupils in the effective participation of a particular lesson. Well-managed team teaching lessons target all strands of the English curriculum on a cyclical basis.

• Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are organised in consultation with parents and class teachers. Targets are reviewed twice yearly. A review of these targets is recommended to ensure their compliance with curriculum guidelines and the school plan. It is also recommended that these targets relate more specifically to the identified needs of individual pupils. Learning support short-term plans should be based on these identified needs.

Published April 2011
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board on Management of St Ibar’s N.S. welcome the report and thank the inspector for her courtesy and professionalism during the inspection. We are encouraged and gratified by the recognition of the dedication and commitment of the Principal and staff.

The report will enhance further the work of the school and provide a new focus for a renewal of commitment by all parties.