An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Carrowhelly NS,
Westport, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 17483R

Date of inspection: 10 February 2011
1. Introduction

Carrowholly NS is a four teacher rural co-educational school situated four kilometres northwest of Westport. The Catholic Archbishop of Tuam is the school patron. Pupil attendance is generally very good. The school has grown and developed in recent years and a major extension and refurbishment was completed in 2009. The building is very well maintained and very attractively presented. The school participates in the Department’s support programme DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). The board of management of the school 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 is effective in providing and maintaining very attractive school accommodation and facilities.
- The school principal is dedicated and hardworking and has successfully fostered a culture of teamwork and concern for pupils.
- The staff of the school demonstrates high levels of commitment and enthusiasm for their work.
- Very effective teaching was observed and standards of pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy are very high.
- The quality of the supplementary teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high standard.
- The school has commenced the process of school self evaluation and commendable progress is being made in this regard.
- Very effective work has been undertaken in the school’s Green Flag project.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The school is advised to implement a whole-school approach to oral language development.
- Aspects of the school plan need to be reviewed to ensure the effective implementation of the Primary Curriculum.
- Moltar níos mó béime a chur ar Ghaeilge labhartha chun an cur chuige cumarsáideach a chur chun cinn.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is praised for its commitment to the school and for the provision and maintenance of high quality accommodation and facilities. Currently parents make a financial contribution towards a number of visiting tutors for classes during the school day. The board is advised to make alternative arrangements for the provision of these aspects of the curriculum.
• The enthusiastic and hardworking principal is highly commended for his dedication to the school community. He has provided strong leadership for the school and has succeeded in fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration. He is now advised to focus on his role as instructional leader in the school. While formal staff meetings take place on a frequent basis, the in-school management team operates on an informal basis. It is recommended that the posts of responsibility be revised and a more formal structure of team meetings and accountability be established.

• The quality of the management of resources is good. The school is well resourced with a wide array of valuable materials which are effectively used. The school is now advised to develop its use of technology to further enhance teaching and learning.

• The management of pupils is very effective. The school deals very successfully with some challenging needs and nurtures a holistic approach to its pupils. Responses to pupil questionnaires indicate that the majority of pupils are happy at school and feel safe there.

• Relationships between parents and teachers are open and welcoming. All responses to parental questionnaires indicate that the school is well run and parents express very high levels of satisfaction with the education provided to their children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of school planning is good. The staff and board have devised a wide range of policies which reflect the school’s context. The school is advised to review its oral language policy with a view to providing more structured approaches to language development.

• The school has recently engaged in the process of analysing test data and reviewing pupils’ academic progress. This good practice of school self-evaluation is highly commended. It is advised that this information be shared with the board of management so that it will be informed about pupil achievement in the school.

• The quality of individual teacher planning is generally good with some very good quality planning observed. There is an agreed format for recording the monthly progress records. It is advised that a similar format be agreed for teachers’ short term planning.

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 overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers are competent and hard working and have well developed teaching skills. During the course of the evaluation, lessons observed were clear and well presented with an appropriate range of methodologies. Pupils engaged well with their learning and demonstrated high skill levels in some areas.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Songs and poems are used to good effect in the infant classes to ensure that pupils develop both language skills and core vocabulary. It is advised that a greater emphasis be placed on fostering communication across the school. Most of the senior pupils demonstrate proficient communication skills and some of these pupils can speak at length on different themes. They have achieved a good standard in reading also. It is advised that pupils be given more opportunities to write independently in Irish.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good as is reflected in recent standardised test results. Very effective development of early literacy skills was observed. Very useful structures are in place to develop pupils' independent writing ability. Worthwhile initiatives such as peer tutoring are being implemented. The school is now advised to implement a whole-school approach to oral language development. This should ensure that discrete time is allocated to this area in each class and that pupils are exposed to focused lessons targeted at improving their oral competencies. Further investment in the school's stock of library books is advised.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Many pupils in the senior classes have achieved very high standards of mathematical attainment. Very effective strategies such as the use of individual whiteboards for mental maths and frequent revision of topics covered were observed. It is recommended that an agreed problem-solving strategy be devised on a whole-school basis.

- Good quality lessons in Geography were observed during the evaluation. These involve clear presentation of concepts and opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as observing, questioning, analysing and mapping. The school has also undertaken very high quality work in the strand Environmental awareness and care. It is advised that the school plan for Geography be reviewed with a greater emphasis placed on the many interesting geographical features of the local environment.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with special educational needs. Effective whole-school approaches are in place which facilitate the management of pupils and enable them to fulfil their potential.
• Very high quality teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs were observed during the course of the evaluation. In-class support interventions are well developed. Regular liaison meetings are held between class teachers and the support teacher to ensure effective collaboration. Good quality individual education plans have been devised. It is advised that copies of these plans be provided to parents.

• The quality of home-school partnership is very good. The school’s parent association provides valuable support to the work of the school. The school building is used by local community groups as a meeting facility and there is a strong emphasis on partnership in the school’s culture.

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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 and Staff Members of Carrowholly N.S. are very happy with the overall content of the report and the manner in which the inspection was conducted by the inspector.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Since the inspection, the Board and Staff have acted on the recommendations made in the report. Programmes in line with the recommendation made in the report, are now in place in Carrowholly N.S.