Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Almhide NS,
Kilmeague, Naas, Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla: 17567A

Date of inspection: 26 May 2011
1. Introduction

Almhaine NS is a 232-pupil primary school located in Kilmeague, Co. Kildare. Under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, the school endeavours to make all pupils feel welcome, cherished, safe and secure. The school is advised to place a further emphasis on improving pupils’ attendance rates and punctuality. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The board of management and parent’s association are strongly committed to supporting the work of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Management and staff work effectively to provide a clean, safe and caring learning environment for pupils.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following main recommendations are made:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Curricular policies should be reviewed to ensure that they provide effective guidance for individual teacher planning and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The school should prioritise the monitoring of curriculum implementation to ensure that there is breadth, balance, continuity and progression in the pupils’ learning across the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Quality of School Management

| • The board of management is supportive of the work of the school and members carry out their duties conscientiously. In particular, the board’s role in the improvement of the school building and facilities is praised. School finances are carefully managed. The board is involved in the development and ratification of policies. Going forward, the board is advised to become more informed about teaching and learning within the school. Consideration should be given to improving communications with the parent’s association and the wider parent body. |
| • The principal fosters the development of a positive school climate and good relationships among the school community. The deputy principal and two special duties teachers diligently carry out the responsibilities they are presently allocated. The regular review of duties attaching to posts is advised and an increased focus should be placed on curriculum leadership. |
| • The management of physical and human resources is good. There is an adequate range of resources to support curriculum implementation. The school has recently made a considerable investment in the installation of information and communication technology (ICT). |
On the whole, relations and communications with parents and the wider school community are managed effectively. The parent’s association contributes actively to the work of the school. Parents are kept informed of their children’s progress and are updated regularly regarding school activities. Discussion with parent representatives and the responses to parent questionnaires indicate overall satisfaction with the operation of the school.

The staff is committed to promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. There is a positive atmosphere in classrooms and pupils are generally well behaved. Pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. In questionnaires, the majority of pupils report that they feel safe in school and know the school and class rules.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

Organisational plans are of a good quality and inform daily operations in the school. The board is advised to revise its enrolment policies to ensure they comply with current legislation. Curriculum plans should be reviewed to ensure that they reflect the particular circumstances of the school and provide guidance to teachers on whole-school strategies and approaches. Further direction on the content for the various class levels should be included to provide guidance to ensure continuity and progression in the pupils’ learning experiences. Suggestions were discussed at the post-evaluation meetings. A framework for the cyclical review of all plans and policies should be developed.

Recent school self-evaluation has focused on the key area of teaching and learning. The use of targeted action plans to address identified priorities is now recommended.

The overall quality of individual teacher planning is good. The more consistent use of curriculum-based, objective-led short-term planning for all subjects is recommended to ensure the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum. Provision for differentiating lesson content should become more explicit within planning to inform practice. The use of Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework, to inform planning in the infant classes is commendable.

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 quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers provide attractive learning environments and their classroom management skills are well developed. Pair and group work are used productively during some lessons but there is scope for this provision to be developed to include more sustained collaborative and co-operative activities. Some differentiation of teaching and learning activities was observed during the course of the evaluation. It is recommended that some teachers should provide for greater breadth, balance, continuity and progression in certain subject areas. Pupils’ written work is well
monitored. Pupils display a good level of engagement in their learning and can appropriately discuss aspects of their previous learning.

- Some very good assessment practices are evident in the school, most notably when they are linked to specific learning objectives. This practice should be extended throughout the school. A good range of screening, standardised and diagnostic tests are used within the school. The results of standardised tests have been used to appropriately target available resources to support pupils with additional needs in literacy. Commendably, the school is tracking the progress of individual pupils in literacy and numeracy. Further analysis of data at a classroom and whole-school level is advised to inform differentiation.

- Cé gur sonraíodh roinnt cleachtas éifeachtach i dtagasc na Gaeilge, tá scóp chun cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge a fheabhsú. Déantar iarraidh dáiúir dearadh dearfach i leith na teanga a chothú i measc daltaí na scoile. Aithrisíonn na daltaí raon rann agus dánta. Úsáideann oidí áirithe modhanna múinte eagsúla agus straitéisí difríúla le linn na gceachtanna ar a n-áirítear cluichí, rólghlacadh, obair bheirte agus amhráín. In ainneoin sin, sonraítear easpa líofachta áirithe i gcumas cainte na ndaltaí. Chun dul i ngleic leis seo, moltar don bhufoireann tuilleadh béime a leagan an gcuir chugiu cumarsáideach. Baintear úsáid mhaith as fíor leabhar ar roinnt ranganna ach b'fhéidir b'fhéidir sa bhreis a chur ar fhoghrálocht. Moltar freisin modh an aisteáireachta a sheachaint sa léitheoireacht. Moltar scileanna saor-scribhneoireachta a sheachaint in ndaltaí a fhobairt ar bhonn níos céimniúla.

- While some effective practice was noted in the teaching of Irish, there is scope to improve the quality of learning in Irish. An earnest effort is made to promote a positive attitude towards Irish among the pupils of the school. Pupils recite a range of rhymes and poems. Some teachers use a variety of methodologies and different strategies during lessons including games, role play, pair work and songs. Despite this, pupils show a lack of fluency in their oral competencies. To address this, teachers are advised to increase the emphasis on the communicative approach. Good use is made of real books in some classes but greater emphasis should be placed on pronunciation. It is also recommended that translation be avoided in reading. Pupils’ free writing skills should be developed more systematically.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Opportunities are provided for pupils to express themselves in a range of contexts. In order to maximise the development of the pupils’ listening and speaking competence, all teachers are advised to ensure that the breadth of primary curriculum oral language objectives is addressed consistently. Pupils develop their reading skills through the use of a wide range of reading materials and the use of individualised parallel readers throughout the school is praiseworthy. Many teachers provide opportunities for pupils to write in a range of genres and attend well to the writing process. Emphasis is placed on listening to, reciting and writing poetry.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Resources are well used in many classes to develop and consolidate pupils’ understanding of mathematical concepts. In some classes, the practical relevance of Mathematics is reinforced. Oral mental mathematical activities should become more integral to teaching and learning to ensure frequent revision of previously taught concepts.

- There is scope to implement more fully the breadth of the Music curriculum. Pupils enjoy music lessons and song singing is well attended to throughout the school. Pupils are introduced to tin whistle playing from second class. While listening and responding and composition activities are addressed well in some classes, further development of this work is recommended to ensure that pupils are exposed to a wide range of musical
genres and that appropriate responses are encouraged at the various class levels. A more systematic approach to the development of pupils’ musical literacy and concepts is also advised. The school’s participation in external musical events complements work undertaken at a classroom level.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Overall provision for pupils with special educational needs and additional language needs is good. Teachers have developed constructive relationships with pupils and adequately support their identified needs. A variety of effective teaching methodologies and a good range of resources, including ICT, are employed successfully. Good emphasis is placed on early intervention.

- Individual or group plans are provided for pupils in receipt of support. Consideration should be given to formally involving parents in the development of these plans. A more systematic structure for the recording of pupil progress should be implemented in some settings and these records should be stored centrally for each pupil.

- Consideration should be given to extending provision to pupils experiencing learning difficulties in Mathematics. Other models of support which will maximise the impact of available resources and enable pupils to engage more fruitfully with their peers should be explored in addition to withdrawal.

- The special-needs assistants effectively promote the participation of assigned pupils within the school.

Published, November 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 of Management of Scoil na Tríonóide Naofa, Allen wishes to thank the inspectors of the Department of Education and Skills for their professionalism and courtesy during our successful Whole School Evaluation.

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

The Board acknowledges the benefits of a W.S.E. and welcomes the positive findings, constructive comments and recommendations as outlined in the Report.