Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Rath an Iubhair
Rath an Iubhair, Inis Córthaidh,
Contae Loch Garman
Uimhir rolla: 17707N

Date of inspection: 19 January 2012
1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Rath An Iubhair is a seven-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school, with a current enrolment of 134 pupils. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. Attendance levels in the school are excellent. 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 school is characterised by its positive school climate and co-operative working relationships are in evidence across the school community.
- Excellent support is provided to the school by the board of management, the parents and the wider school community.
- Teachers demonstrate high standards of teaching and use a wide variety of approaches and resources very effectively.
- Overall, teaching, learning and pupil achievement are of a high quality.
- The well maintained school building and grounds provide a stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Curriculum plans should be reviewed, to ensure that they provide greater guidance to teachers, with clear links between individual teacher planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum.

3. Quality of School Management

- The highly supportive board of management ensures that the school is well resourced and that the building and grounds are developed and maintained to a high standard. The board is committed to promoting positive and open communication with staff, parents and members of the wider community. The joint meeting with the parents’ association, which devised a three-year action plan, and which is currently being implemented, is lauded.

- The in-school management team comprises of the principal, the deputy principal and one special-duties teacher. The quality of leadership in the school is commendable and the team carries out its duties with dedication and commitment. The principal has strong interpersonal qualities and supports and encourages colleagues, and facilitates their professional development. He is capably supported by the members of the in-school management team who fulfil a broad range of duties effectively.

- The beautifully maintained school building and grounds provide a stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment. The school is equipped to a very high standard with a broad range of purposeful resources to enhance teaching and learning.
• The management of pupils is very good. Pupils are valued members of the school community. Whole-school assemblies are a feature of school life and pupil participation in decision making is promoted effectively through the work of the Green Schools’ committee. All pupils surveyed report that they feel safe in the playground and in their classrooms.

• The school is characterised by its open and welcoming atmosphere. The parents’ association, parents generally and the local community provide commendable support to the school. Parents are involved in a range of school-based activities including Maths for Fun, Shared Reading, the Green Schools and a variety of sporting activities. In the parent questionnaires, all parents consider that their children are doing well in school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• Overall the quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is good. In particular, the school is commended for the quality of its DEIS action plan. The adoption of effective implementation and review procedures has ensured that the plan has had a very positive impact on pupils’ learning. A strategic plan, outlining a range of curricular and organisational priorities has been formulated and all plans and policies are reviewed on a cyclical basis. As indicated in the parents questionnaires, consideration should be given to affording the parents greater opportunities to familiarise themselves with pertinent plans and policies.

• Current curriculum plans are broad and general in nature. It is advised that they are contextualised to the school, to ensure that they provide greater guidance for individual teacher planning and clearly outline the spiral approach to the pupils’ learning. Clear links should be established between individual teacher planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum.

• 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

• Teaching, learning and pupil achievement are of a high quality. Teachers exhibit well-developed classroom management skills and have prepared productive learning environments. They use a range of teaching approaches and resources skilfully and explain concepts clearly. Classroom atmospheres are positive and interactions between teachers and pupils are encouraging and supportive. Teachers engage in continuous professional development to enhance their classroom skills. Parental questionnaire responses indicate that almost all parents consider that teaching is good in the school.

• The pupils’ work is monitored closely and constructive feedback is provided. An appropriate range of screening, standardised and diagnostic tests is administered. The school is to be commended for introducing standardised testing in Irish. Standardised test results are analysed on a whole-school basis to provide a detailed picture of pupil achievement.

• Sroichtear caighdeán maith i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Baineann na múinteoirí úsáid éifeachtach as réimse leathan straitéisí agus áiseanna chun suim na
The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. The teachers make effective use of a wide range of strategies and resources to stimulate the pupils' interest. The pupils can recite and sing a wide repertoire of songs and poems. A majority of pupils demonstrate good understanding and make suitable efforts to use their vocabulary. To build on this it is recommended that extended opportunities be provided for pupils to practise and consolidate their learning during the communication phase of lessons. The pupils read class textbooks with accuracy and are able to answer questions. They are provided with some opportunities to write independently and this good practice should be extended. Pupils are given regular opportunities to practise functional and creative writing in Irish.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. There is evidence that pupils can express their views with suitable confidence and competence. The school employs a range of strategies to develop pupils' reading skills and the pupils display proficient reading standards. In their questionnaire responses, most pupils reported that they are doing well at reading. The pupils are enabled to produce writing in a wide variety of genres and some laudable examples of the pupils writing are in evidence. ICT is used very effectively to assist in the publication of their work.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Due emphasis is placed on mental Mathematics, on language development and on estimation. Concepts are clearly explained, good use is made of concrete resources and pupils’ skills are developed through appropriate learning activities. Beneficial use is made of games to support learning.

- The teaching of Science in the school is of a high standard. Pupils frequently engage in paired and group work, in designing and making activities and in simple experiments, all of which facilitate the application of scientific knowledge and skills. The teachers are commended for the promotion of Science through praiseworthy participation in initiatives such as Science Week and the Green Schools. The school was recently awarded its first green flag and it is currently working towards achieving its second flag.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is of a high quality. The SEN model incorporates both in-class support and withdrawal. The SEN team employs a suitable range of diagnostic tests, in addition to feedback from parents and teachers, to inform individualised programmes. It is advised that the school policy be reviewed to ensure that it makes provision for early intervention.

- Through the implementation of well-designed lessons, the pupils demonstrate continuing progress in the achievement of their learning goals. Teacher-pupil interactions are highly affirmative and succeed in fostering the pupils’ self-belief. Praiseworthy levels of communication between SEN personnel, class teachers and parents are evident.

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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 B.O.M. of Rathnure N.S. wish to thank the D.E.S. Inspector for her courtesy and diligence as she carried out the evaluation. We were impressed with the manner in which she engaged with the pupils of the school.

The Board wishes to take this opportunity to congratulate the staff, parents and especially children on their high standard of achievement in all areas of education.

We are extremely proud of our school and all the people who are connected to it. We are very pleased to see mentioned that our school is a happy place to work for the pupils and staff and that our school enjoys the regard and support of the Rathnure Community.

The report gives great encouragement to all involved.

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 B.O.M. and staff will examine and implement the recommendation of the report as part of the school’s on-going process of self evaluation and planning.