Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Michael’s NS
Crosspatrick, via Thurles, County Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 17758H

Date of inspection: 19 October 2011
1. **Introduction**

St. Michael’s NS is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. There are twenty-seven pupils enrolled and attendance is very good. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation; 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 principal manages the school competently. The teachers demonstrate their commitment to directing the ongoing development of the school and work hard to achieve the best learning outcomes for pupils.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school and conscientiously oversees the maintenance and improvement of the building and grounds.
- Parents willingly assist the work of the school and indicate high levels of satisfaction with overall school performance.
- Múintear an Ghaeilge go han-chumasach agus go héif eachtach agus tá caighdeán inmholta á bhaint amach ag na daltaí. *Irish is very capably and effectively taught and the pupils achieve a commendable standard.*
- Reading for pleasure is promoted successfully in conjunction with parents.
- The pupils’ behaviour is excellent and they engage fully in their learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The impact of individual teachers’ short-term planning should be strengthened by ensuring greater connection to the school plan and by placing increased emphasis on the impact of assessment on teaching and learning.
- School self-evaluation practices should be formally introduced and include the setting of specific and measurable targets and the systematic evaluation of planning outcomes.
- In Music, it is advised that greater attention be directed to the development of the pupils’ literacy skills and that composition feature more prominently.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school and conscientiously oversees the maintenance and improvement of the building and grounds. A comprehensive range of useful organisational policies has been formulated, although aspects of some policies merit review.
• The recently appointed principal manages the school competently and plays a significant role in curriculum leadership. The teachers demonstrate a keen interest in the ongoing development of the school. All management duties are carried out effectively.

• The school building provides a comfortable environment for pupils and teachers and improvements to the building and grounds have been progressed significantly by the principal. A broad range of appropriate teaching and learning resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), is available to support the implementation of the curriculum and is used widely by teachers. The increased availability of reading material in English and in Irish is advised, along with the greater provision of puzzles and board games to further improve the pupils’ problem-solving skills in Mathematics.

• Good communication within the school community is in evidence and the school website provides useful information for parents. In turn, parents provide significant assistance to the school to support pupils’ learning. Questionnaire responses indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with overall school performance.

• The management of pupils is very good and their behaviour is excellent. All relationships are respectful and inclusive. Of particular note are the pupils’ capacity to work independently and collaboratively, and their full engagement in all learning activities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of whole-school curricular planning is excellent and it is advised that the teachers use these plans to inform their individual long-term planning. The impact of their short-term planning would also be strengthened by specifying learning objectives more clearly, by placing stronger emphasis on assessment and its influence on teaching and learning, and by ensuring greater connection to the school plan.

• The teachers reflect upon their practice effectively and are committed to ensuring continued school improvement. Pupil achievement in aspects of learning is monitored regularly and attainment in standardised testing in English and Mathematics is tracked consistently. Nonetheless, the use of a wider range of assessment strategies should be agreed at whole-school level and in turn become integral to the teaching and learning continuum. It is recommended that school self-evaluation practices be formally introduced and include the setting of specific and measurable targets and the systematic evaluation of planning outcomes.

• 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 very good. The teachers communicate high expectations regarding pupil achievement and as a consequence, the quality of learning outcomes is also very good. Well-structured teaching, combining a range of methodologies, is used consistently. Oral aspects of lessons are emphasised suitably
and the pupils benefit from targeted speaking opportunities with their teachers and peers. They present as confident learners and willingly demonstrate the high quality of their learning achievements.

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go han-chumasach agus tá caighdeán inmholta á bhaint amach ag na daltaí. Cuirtear an chumarsáid ina cuid lármach den phróiseas teagaisc agus foghlama. Dá bharr sin, tá na daltaí, sna meánranga agus sna hard ranga ach go háraithe, in ann an teanga a úsáid chun cumarsáid éifeachtach a dhéanamh. Moltar go speisialta na hoidí de bharr a ndearfacht ina lár den teanga agus an saibhreas agus an cruinneas atá le sonrú ina gcuid teanga féin. Tá scéim mhaith litéithe a bhaint amach ar bun agus leann fórmhór na ndaltaí le liofacht. Déantar dea-fhorbairt na scríbhneoireachta. B'fhéidir tuilleadh béime a leagan ar an saorscríbhneoireacht.

Irish is very capably taught and the pupils achieve a commendable standard. Communication is prioritised within the teaching and learning process. Consequently, the pupils, most notably in the middle and senior classes, use Irish effectively to communicate. The teachers’ positive attitude to Irish, together with the richness and accuracy of their own language, are especially praiseworthy. There is a good reading scheme in place and most pupils read with fluency. Writing skills are well developed. It is recommended that increased emphasis be placed on independent writing.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral language skills are purposefully developed and talk and discussion is a central feature of lessons. In order to continue to improve the pupils’ oral competence, it is advised that further opportunities to develop their language skills be explored across the curriculum. Reading for pleasure is promoted successfully in conjunction with parents, including through a home-based, book club initiative. A process approach to writing is beneficially employed. The quality of the pupils’ handwriting and the presentation of written work are highly commended. The range of writing genres practised by junior pupils should be extended.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The results of the pupil questionnaires indicate that all pupils consider that they are doing well at Maths. Significant emphasis is placed upon consolidation and manipulation of number. Challenges are differentiated suitably for all class levels, enabling the pupils to progress and experience success. New concepts are presented, developed and explained carefully. In-class support for Mathematics in the senior room is employed beneficially. In order to further improve attainment, it is advised that renewed emphasis be placed on the incremental development of problem-solving skills.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is satisfactory. There is particular emphasis on song singing and the pupils sing a suitable repertoire of songs with obvious enjoyment. They play percussion instruments to accompany songs and create and perform dances in response to Music. It is advised that greater attention be directed to the development of the pupils’ literacy skills and that composition feature more prominently. It is further advised that greater investment in percussion instruments be considered along with the teaching of a tuned instrument.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Good quality support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Individual needs are assessed appropriately and programmes, that are responsive to these needs, are developed and implemented successfully through both in-class and pupil-withdrawal measures. It is advised that meetings with parents be facilitated at the beginning of each
instructional term and that they be provided with a copy of their child’s learning programme.

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