Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Clydagh National School
Headford, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 17793J

Date of inspection: 10 May 2011
1. Introduction
Clydagh National School is a co-educational primary school situated in the parish of Headford, Co. Galway. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. There are 26 pupils enrolled in the school. The school building is well maintained inside and outside. An extension is due to be added to the school shortly. The enhanced facilities and opportunities the extension will provide should be a very positive development in the history of the school. 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:

- There is a homely atmosphere in the school and a positive attitude to learning is fostered at each class level.
- Each member of the school staff works diligently to provide pupils with a broad and balanced education.
- A variety of effective teaching methods is used in each classroom.
- Pupil achievement across the curricular areas observed is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish at each class level in the school is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Music is very good throughout the school.
- A range of good quality resources is available to enhance teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Music.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs should be reviewed to provide a more focused and more effective service.
- More emphasis should be placed on word exploration and the use of talk and discussion in English reading lessons.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and meets at least once a term. The board is committed to improving the facilities available in the school. The school’s accounts are certified annually by an accountant. The board’s current priority is to complete the extension to the school building.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal carries out her duties as a classroom teacher, as well as her administrative and management duties, very competently and diligently. Her vision for the school is for it to continue to be a central part of the local community. She also hopes that the imminent
extension of the school building will provide improved opportunities to successfully implement the curriculum. The special-duties teacher’s responsibilities are clearly set out and include performing the principal’s duties when she is not available. This work is carried out very efficiently.

- A good variety of educational resources is available in the school to enhance the teaching and learning process. In particular, the school has invested in providing useful teaching aids for Irish, English, Mathematics and Music. The work of the special-needs assistant (SNA) makes a useful contribution to the organisation and management of relevant activities and lessons.

- The pupils in the school are very well behaved. They are welcoming to visitors and are keen to discuss what they have learned in the various curricular areas. The results of pupil questionnaires indicate that pupils are very satisfied with the school.

- While the school does not have a parents’ association, there is a very good relationship between parents and the school staff. Parents’ representatives and the results of parent questionnaires indicate that parents are very happy with the school and that the school is a very important part of the local community. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. Parents report that the school has an open and welcoming atmosphere.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good overall. It is recommended, however, that a three-year action plan be drawn up to provide a clear framework for the review and further development of the school plan.

- The school plan contains whole-school plans for each curricular area. These documents provide useful guidance for teachers in the preparation of classroom plans. Overall, classroom planning is good, although there is a need to ensure that it is more clearly laid out to further enhance the teaching and learning process.

- Organisational and administrative policies are clearly laid out and are specific to the needs of the school. It is recommended, however, that the policy on pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs be updated.

- 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, learning and pupil achievement in the school is good. A variety of effective teaching methods is used at each class level. Most pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of the work covered across the curriculum. Teachers regularly monitor and correct pupils’ work and provide pupils with positive feedback.
The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good in every class. A positive attitude to Irish is fostered throughout the school. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing pupils’ listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in Irish. The pupils speak fluently within the themes that have been addressed in their class programme. Pupils are articulate in introducing and talking about themselves and other issues. Most pupils have a wide vocabulary and they demonstrate creditable comprehension.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Almost all pupils attain a very commendable standard in English. Oral-language development is given due attention and pupils are articulate in expressing their opinions and talking about the work they have done. In striving for excellence, however, and as a means of raising English reading standards still further for each pupil, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the exploration of new words and on talk and discussion in reading lessons. Pupils’ functional and creative writing is commendable at each class level. There is a need in some cases, however, to place more emphasis on the neatness and presentation of this work.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing pupils’ mathematical language and mathematical games are skilfully used. Lessons are appropriately differentiated to cater for the range of pupil abilities. Most pupils demonstrate good knowledge of the work covered across a range of topics. As a means of enhancing the status of Mathematics in the school and thus raising standards still further, however, it is recommended that a mathematics-rich environment be further developed in each classroom and throughout the school.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is very good. The range of work covered across the various strands of the Music curriculum is highly commendable. Pupils at each class level sing a wide variety of songs in Irish, English and French very tunefully. Songs are accompanied very skilfully with melodic and percussion instruments. The curriculum strand Listening and responding is given due attention in each classroom.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

The teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs have a number of positive aspects. Pupils have a positive attitude and they work well with their learning-support and resource teachers. Some worthwhile information is set out in the individual and group education plans for these pupils. There is a need, however, to update the whole-school policy for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs. This should ensure that the policy accurately reflects current provision, and that it provides a clearer framework for the implementation of specific teaching and learning targets.

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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 of Management and staff of Clydagh N.S. welcome this report. We commend the visiting inspector for his courtesy and professionalism. The objective evaluation afforded by this process was very affirming of the high standards and good practices in the school. We look forward to the further development of Clydagh N.S. to enhance the educational opportunities we provide to our community.

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 WSE the board and staff have acted on the recommendations made. Our policy on S.E.N. is in the process of being reviewed.