Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Our Lady’s NS
Nurney, County Carlow
Uimhir rolla: 17796P

Date of inspection:  14 April 2011
1. Introduction

Our Lady’s NS, Nurney is a vertical, co-educational school with 35 pupils. It operates under the patronage of the bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. Pupil attendance rates, for the most part, are satisfactory. 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 commitment of board of management members to the school and its development is commendable.
- A strong sense of community is evident in the school.
- The school building provides an excellent learning environment for pupils.
- An excellent range of resources is provided and used in the school.
- Pupils are very well managed and they present as confident young people.
- Múintear an Ghaeilge go han-éifeachtúil sa scoil agus léirion na daltaí ard-chaighdeán ó bhéal sa Ghaeilge. *Irish is taught very effectively in the school and the pupils achieve a high standard in oral Irish.*
- The teaching of Mathematics is very good.
- Pupils with special needs are very well catered for in the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The duties assigned to the special duties post holder should be reviewed in order to reflect the school’s current priorities.
- The school should adopt a more systematic approach to the development of the pupils’ literacy skills.
- The current approach to assessment in the school should be reviewed.
- The focus on pupils with exceptional abilities should be continued and progressed.

3. Quality of School Management

- This is a well-managed school. The board of management is properly constituted and meets very regularly. Members display considerable commitment to the school. Significant energy and effort has gone into the provision of a new school building. Members of the board are commended for their work in that regard. Having achieved this aim, consideration should now be given to ensuring awareness of standards in the school, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
There are two class teachers in the school which facilitates the adoption of an informal management style. This works very well. All parents, in questionnaires, contend that the school is very well run. Excellent relations and communications with the community are evident and the leadership style adopted by the principal is proactive. The principal is ably supported by the special duties post holder. Both work conscientiously and the outcomes of their work to date are impressive. It is recommended that the duties assigned to the post holder are reviewed to reflect the school’s current priorities.

The range and use of resources in the school is impressive. The school’s ICT facilities are excellent and good progress is being made in relation to ensuring their effective use. Classroom management strategies utilised by teachers are excellent and pupils are affirmed in their work. The pupils, in questionnaires, strongly endorse the work of their teachers in that regard.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

The quality of school planning is good. A range of policies successfully underpin administrative practices in the school. The teachers know the school, the pupils and the challenges facing them. They are cognisant of the pupils’ strengths and also display good understanding of the challenges facing the school.

Good curriculum planning is evident. Whole school plans inform practice in the classrooms and it is evident that these have been drawn up collaboratively. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that consideration be given to the introduction of targets in aspects of pupil performance. For example, the formulation of specific and realistic targets for improvements in the pupils’ literacy skills would be of benefit.

The quality of individual teacher planning is satisfactory.

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In some curriculum areas, notably Gaeilge and Mathematics, the quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are resourced appropriately and presented well. Pupils’ efforts are encouraged and affirmed and the teachers structure lessons capably which ensures the engagement of the various class levels. The quality of questioning, including higher order questions, is very good. Lessons are well paced and have a clear focus. Parents and pupils strongly endorse the work of the school in questionnaires.

Moltar múineadh na Gaeilge sa scoil. Cothaítear dea-thoil don Ghaeilge i measc na ndaltaí go héifeachtúil. Scroichtear caighdeán ard ó bhéal agus labhraíonn na daltaí go muiníneach ar théamaí bunaithe ar a dtímpeallacht. Tugtar deiseanna oiriúnacha do na daltaí a scileanna scríbhneoireachta a chleachtadh agus a fheabhsú. Úsáidtear
The teaching of Irish in the school is praised. A positive attitude towards Irish is fostered effectively among the pupils. A very high standard of oral Irish is achieved and the pupils speak confidently about themes based on their environment. The textbook is used judiciously in that regard. While most of the pupils read accurately, the use of English during reading lessons should be avoided.

Many aspects of the English curriculum are taught effectively. The drama programme employed in the school has assisted greatly in the development of the pupils and they present confidently. The library facilities in the school are excellent, including the provision of books for parents in the school's foyer. The pupils' written work is, for the most part, presented appropriately. Pupils' written efforts are monitored and affirmed appropriately.

In order to build on good practice, it is recommended that a strategy for the development of the pupils' literacy skills be developed and implemented. This should include planning for the provision of reading materials at instructional level and further attention to the pupils' writing skills to include the development of their editing skills and writing in a greater variety of genres. Assessment practices in the school should also be reviewed in the context of the development of a literacy strategy.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. An effective balance is struck between practical, hands-on work and theoretical work. Technology is used effectively in lessons. It is evident that pupils enjoy and benefit from this approach. While oral work is a feature of lessons, consideration should be given to achieving consistency in the development of the pupils' problem solving skills.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons are well taught. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate and formulate relevant views and opinions. Thematic approaches are employed successfully. The vision espoused for the school which centres on the holistic development of the pupil is manifest in many aspects of work conducted in SPHE.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

Pupils with special educational needs are very well catered for in this school. The learning environment created in the resource room is warm and welcoming. The teachers involved in resource and learning-support provision plan their work effectively. Lessons are well structured and it is evident that the pupils are progressing. To build on this good work, consideration should be given to the provision of occasional in-class support. This might be considered in the context of the development of a literacy strategy. The emphasis placed on meeting the needs of very able pupils in the school is welcome. It is recommended that this continues and that consideration be given to the assignment of formal project work to these pupils by the resource and learning-support team.

Links and communications between the school and the homes and the community in general are excellent. The size of the school and its position in the community assists greatly in that regard.

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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 school community of Nurney very much welcome this WSE report and the fact that it acknowledges the diligence and care put into the school building and teaching of and learning by the pupils on the part of the B.O.M., staff, parents and pupils of the school. We are very proud of our school and the central role it plays in the village. We wish to thank the inspector for his courtesy and encouragement during his visit.

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

In line with the recommendations teachers have undertaken in-service in the area of literacy, which as acknowledged in the report, is an area of great importance to us. Parents have been encouraged to take an even more active role in this area also. The duties of the Sp.D.T. have been reviewed to focus more on literacy. We hope to provide a greater range of literacy books for the less able readers. As a B.O.M. we hope that the cutbacks to Resource Teaching hours and SNA provision will not have a negative effect on our efforts.