Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation REPORT

St Conleth and Mary’s NS, Newbridge, Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla: 17872F

Date of inspection: 9 November 2011
1. Introduction

St Conleth and Mary’s Primary School is located in Newbridge, County Kildare. It caters for boys and girls from second to sixth class. Under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, the school was originally established by the Sisters of the Holy Family and the school’s ethos is still influenced by its founders. There are 376 pupils enrolled in the school and attendance rates are satisfactory. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and five special education settings. 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 board of management and parents’ association are well informed and are highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The teachers demonstrate commitment to the school and to their work and are commended for their willingness to embrace new initiatives and approaches.
- The overall standard of teaching and learning in English, Mathematics and History is high.
- The quality of the school environment is very good. The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard.
- There is very good management and use of resources in the school. Teachers are commended for the quality of displays and for the provision of stimulating learning environments.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that teachers differentiate class programmes, lessons and activities more effectively in order to cater for the diverse range of learning and language needs in their classes.
- Re-organisation of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is recommended.
- Moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt go córasach tríd an scoil. It is recommended that the pupils’ expressive language skills in Irish be developed systematically through the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted, meets regularly and is clearly committed to the development of the school. The board is commended for the manner in which the school building and grounds are maintained. Finances are carefully managed. The board plays an active role in the development of organisational policies.
The principal has a long association with the school and enjoys the respect and support of the board of management, staff and parents. She is ably supported by members of the in-school management team who fulfil a broad range of duties effectively. As a means of building on the capacity and commitment of the team it is recommended that a system of regular review of assigned duties be established in order to ensure that they reflect the evolving needs of the school.

The school is very well resourced and all classrooms and corridors provide safe, clean, bright and stimulating learning environments. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is commendable. Staff are diligent in fulfilling their duties within a spirit of positive collegiality.

The management of relationships with the school community is very good and parents are kept well informed about school activities through regular newsletters and the school’s website. Formal parent-teacher meetings are held annually and written reports are issued to parents at the end of the school year. Questionnaire responses indicate that the vast majority of parents are happy with the school. The parents’ association is very active and parents make a considerable contribution to school life.

The management of pupils is very good. Standards of behaviour and discipline are high. Pupils work conscientiously and cooperatively with staff and with one another and are polite and courteous. Classroom relationships are positive, affirming and respectful. Pupils participate actively in the Green Schools Programme. Questionnaire responses indicate that most pupils like coming to school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

The overall quality of organisational and administrative planning is very good. The board is advised to review its enrolment policy to ensure it complies with current legislation. Curricular plans are of a high standard and are contextualised to the circumstances of the school. The school’s own action planning process has identified the need to monitor the implementation and impact of these plans.

Positive steps towards a process of school self-evaluation have been taken and short-term priorities have been identified. This process would be further enhanced by the creation of a three-year action plan containing some longer-term targets.

The overall quality of classroom planning is good with very good examples observed in some instances. The most effective planning included explicit curriculum objectives, overviews of learning activities to be undertaken and specific information on assessment and differentiation strategies.

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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. All classrooms are stimulating and well organised and provide environments that are rich in print and number. Samples of pupils’ work are attractively presented and displayed. Across the school the quality of handwriting and presentation of work is of a high standard. Teachers employ a variety of methodologies and most lessons observed were well structured and suitably paced. Pupil engagement is good and they are able to discuss their learning confidently and articulately. Most pupils agreed that they find their lessons interesting and almost all agreed that teachers explain things clearly to them. Resources, including ICT, are used judiciously to enhance teaching and learning. To enable all pupils to participate fully and to maximise progress across the curriculum, it is recommended that teachers differentiate their class programmes, lessons and activities more effectively in order to cater for the diverse range of learning and language needs in their classes.

- Assessment practices in the school are good and most teachers keep thorough records of pupils’ progress. Some very good examples of assessment of learning outcomes across the curriculum were observed. Samples of self-assessment and peer assessment were also noted. Standardised and screening tests are administered. There is scope for the use of the data gathered from these assessments to be used to further inform differentiation.

- Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta agus na foghlaimh sa Ghaeilge inghlactha. Cothaítear dearcach dearfach i leith na teanga tríd an scoil agus baineann na daltaí taitneamh agus tairbhe as na ceachtanna. Moltar an úsáid ríalta a bhaineann múinteoirí as an nGaeilge agus na straitéisí a úsáídtear chun an teanga a chur chuig cinn sa scoil. Chun feabhas a bhaint amach b’fhéidir forbarait uile-scoilí a dhéanamh ar chumas cuimsíteachta na ndaltaí agus clár céimníteach leagán amach do gach rangleibhéal. Léann na daltaí le mníin a d’fhéadfaí ar chineálacha difriúla téacsanna. Tá caighdeán sásúil á bhaint amach sa scribhneoireacht theidhmíúil ach moltar liofacht agus cruthaitheacht a chothú a thuilleadh.

There is an acceptable standard of teaching and learning in Irish. A positive attitude towards the language is promoted throughout the school and the pupils enjoy and benefit from their lessons. The regular use that teachers make of Irish during lessons and the strategies that are used to promote the language in the school are praised. To further improve it is recommended that pupils’ communicative abilities are developed on a whole-school basis and that an incremental programme of work is laid out for each class level. The pupils read confidently and they could be provided with a wider variety of different types of text. A satisfactory standard is being achieved in functional writing but further fluency and creativity are recommended.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high standard and the school is commended for its efforts in introducing whole school approaches to aspects of the curriculum. The teachers use questioning effectively, model language precisely and display vocabulary in the classrooms. Reading skills are developed through effective work with class and parallel readers and through engagement with class novels. Pupils read fluently and with expression. Ability groups for reading have been organised in the junior classes and it is recommended that this good practice be extended to other classes. The school has a comfortable and well stocked library. Pupils are enabled to write in a variety of genres and their work is celebrated in many ways and displayed throughout the school. They enjoy a rich and varied repertoire of poetry.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. All lessons observed began with oral work and pupils displayed good flexibility and
confidence in their mental skills. The whole school approach to the use of mathematical language is commended. The use of a variety of concrete and illustrative materials contributes to pupils’ understanding of concepts. Problem-solving and estimation skills are developed successfully.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is good. Pupils have opportunities to examine the past from a range of perspectives and lessons observed included the use of primary sources, exploration of the local environment, gathering of oral evidence and the development of research skills. Timelines are displayed throughout the school. It is recommended that some further work be undertaken on the local studies aspect of the programme in order to ensure that pupils are enabled to explore their environment thoroughly in an incremental way as they progress through the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school is well resourced to support pupils with special educational needs and the teaching and learning observed was characterised by affirming, supportive interactions. Parents are consulted in the formulation of individual education plans (IEPs) and pupils’ progress is communicated to parents at regular intervals. Nonetheless, there is scope to develop and re-organise the provision. A more structured approach to planning based on Department guidelines is recommended. The majority of support is provided on a withdrawal basis. It is recommended that in-class support be extended and that pupils are grouped, when possible, according to social and language needs. Greater balance between literacy and numeracy provision is also advised. A more consistent whole school approach to the implementation of supports for pupils at stage one of the continuum and to the use of ‘classroom support plans’ is recommended.

- The school participates in the School Completion Programme and provides supports for pupils where needed.
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 welcomes the findings of the evaluation of our school. We are pleased that the main strengths of the school were identified and that the commitment of all members of the school community was affirmed.

The Board of Management acknowledges the manner in which the evaluation was efficiently and professionally undertaken and thanks the inspectors for the courtesy which was extended to all.

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 of Management will take on board the recommendations made in the report and they will provide a focus to further enhance the work of the school through their ongoing implementation.