Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Cloghans Hill National School
Tuam, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 17922R

Date of inspection: 18 January 2012
1. Introduction

Cloghans Hill National School is a co-educational primary school situated in the parish of Roundfort, Co. Mayo. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. There are two mainstream class teachers. There are twelve pupils enrolled at present. Overall pupils’ attendance patterns are very good.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and the Visual Arts. 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:

- A positive learning atmosphere is fostered in the school.
- The board of management works diligently to maintain and develop the school.
- The teaching and learning of Irish is very good.
- The overall standards attained in English are good.
- The quality and range of work covered in the Visual Arts is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board of management should consult with key stakeholders regarding the future viability of the school and take appropriate action.
- The school plan should be further developed to ensure that it more accurately reflects the current context and specific needs of the school.
- The school’s learning-support and resource provision should be reviewed to ensure that it is more effectively co-ordinated and more focused on the specific needs of pupils.
- The teaching of Mathematics should be reviewed on a whole-school basis to ensure greater consistency throughout the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and meets twice each term, more often if necessary. The board members have been assigned a range of specific roles. A treasurer’s report is given at each meeting of the board of management. The school’s accounts are certified annually.
- The board of management is committed to maintaining and developing the school’s position in the local community. As a means of developing the school, the board has applied to the Department of Education and Skills to become a Gaelscoil. The board’s other priorities include continuing to improve the school building, grounds and facilities.
• The principal was appointed in 2009. She has made a good start in the administration and day-to-day management of the school. The principal’s vision includes enhancing the school’s role in the community by providing primary education through the medium of Irish. Her curricular priorities include placing further emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The requirements of the national literacy and numeracy strategy provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate leadership in this regard over the next three years.

• A good range of educational resources is available in the school. In particular, the school is well-resourced in information and communication technologies (ICT). There is a need, however, to ensure that resources are used more effectively to enhance the teaching and learning process, for example in Mathematics. School personnel are deployed appropriately overall. The work of the part-time school secretary makes a commendable contribution to the smooth running of the school.

• There is no parents’ association in the school. With twelve pupils enrolled, the school community is small and close-knit. Each of the parents is involved in the organisation of school activities in various ways. Formal parent-teacher meetings are held twice a year. A written report on pupils’ progress is sent to parents at the end of each school year. The results of parents’ questionnaires indicate that parents think the school is well run and that there is a good atmosphere in the school.

• The management of pupils at each class level is good. Pupils are very well-behaved. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors to the school. Pupils are happy to discuss what they have learned. Pupils’ questionnaires indicate that they like school and that their teachers explain things clearly. Most pupils are confident in their ability in English and Mathematics.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• There are many positive aspects in the quality of the school planning and self-evaluation process. A good start has been made in the development of the school plan. A three-year action plan has been devised, outlining areas for development and review. There is a need, however, to further prioritise the review of curricular plans to ensure that they reflect the specific needs of this school. It is recommended that these plans be made available in Irish as well as English, if the school proceeds with its intention to become a Gaelscoil. A good range of administrative policies has been developed and adopted by the board of management. It is recommended, however, that each policy be signed and dated by the chairperson of the board of management, once it has been ratified.

• There is scope for development in the quality of individual teacher planning throughout the school. While each teacher regularly prepares long-term and short-term schemes of work, these need to be presented more clearly. There is a need in some instances to provide more detailed information on how teaching is differentiated for the various grades in each classroom. Planning for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs should be more clearly based on the specific needs of these pupils. A monthly progress record is maintained of the work covered at each class level.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006 (or Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006). School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with
the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement across the curriculum is good overall. Some effective teaching methods are used at each class level to enhance the learning process. The quality of the work covered in Irish, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts, in the junior classes is highly commendable. Teachers regularly monitor and correct pupils’ work. The overall quality of the presentation of this work is good. Positive feedback is regularly used to encourage and motivate pupils.

- Tá cáilíoch an teagaisc agus na foghlaímartha sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith sa scoil seo. Cothaítear dearadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus tá scileanna labhartha inmholta ag na daltaí ag gach leibhéal ranga. Is féidir leis na daltaí ó naíonáin shóisearacha go rang a sé labhairt fúthu féin go muiníneach liofa. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta na ndaltaí ó rang a dó ar aghaidh an-mhaith. Léiríonn siad a dtuisí trí cheisteanna a thug a dtugtar grúin ar an méid atá léite acu. Tá iarraidh inmholt a bhí ann bunsan ann a Ghaeilge a úsáidteachta curaí caite eile. Ba gnáth an cleachtas seo a thugtar níos mó ar fud na scoile, go háirithe má tá an scoil dáiríre faoi fheidehmniú mar Ghaelscoil.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good in this school. A positive attitude is fostered towards Irish and pupils at each class level demonstrate commendable oral language skills. Pupils from junior infants to sixth class can speak about themselves confidently and fluently. Reading standards for pupils from second class onwards is very good. They demonstrate their understanding by answering questions accurately on what they have read. A commendable effort has been made in the junior classes to use Irish in the other curricular areas. There is a need to further develop this practice throughout the school, especially if the school intends to operate as a Gaelscoil.

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- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Appropriate emphasis is placed on oral-language development. The recitation, performance and writing of poetry is good at each class level. Overall standards in reading are good. The school and classroom libraries are well-stocked. It is clear that most pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. Commendable written work, in a variety of genres, is evident in pupils' copybooks and on display in the classrooms.

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- There are many positive aspects to the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics. Much progress has been made in developing a mathematics-rich environment in the school, although there is a need to further expand this work in some of the classrooms. The development of pupils’ mathematical language, mathematical games, and the use of concrete materials, form an effective part of the well-structured lessons observed in the junior classes. There is scope for development, however, in the use of teaching resources in Mathematics at some class levels. It is recommended that the whole-school approach to the teaching of Mathematics be reviewed to ensure greater consistency and continuity throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in the Visual Arts is very good. The high standard of pupils’ artwork is evident in the displays in each classroom and in public areas throughout the school. Particularly good work has been done on Construction and in Fabric and fibre. Due attention is given to developing pupils’ appreciation of the elements of art. Pupils are given regular opportunities to look at and respond to art.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Many aspects of the support provided for pupils are good. Some work has been done in developing an attractive and stimulating learning environment in the learning-support and resource classrooms, but ongoing effort is needed to maintain and improve this. Pupils are given support in English and Mathematics as required. It is recommended, however, that the service be more effectively co-ordinated. This should help to avoid duplication of provision and ensure that those in most need receive more focused support. There is a need, for example, to ensure that the targets set out in individual education plans (IEPs) are explicitly linked to the recommendations made in psychological reports.
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 wishes to thank the inspector for the courtesy and professionalism he afforded the school during his whole school evaluation. The Board welcomes the very positive findings of the report particularly acknowledging the pupils’ excellent behaviour, the positive atmosphere in the school and the overall teaching and learning performance. We are happy the report reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff. We thank the inspector for the thoughtful recommendations and we will seek to implement these in full.

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

- A more co-ordinated and focused review of the school learning support and resource provision is currently underway with improvements to be implemented and the start of the next school term.
- The school plan for Mathematics will be reviewed in the next school term with a view to creating greater consistency throughout the school.
- The school plan is being examined to ensure it accurately reflects the current context and needs of the school.