Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Gurrane National School
Innishannon, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 18020F

Date of inspection: 17 February 2011
1. Introduction

Gurrane National School is a rural co-educational school under the patronage of the catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross and has a current enrolment of 61 pupils. Pupil attendance levels are high and school practice in promoting the same is in line with National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and Departmental guidelines. The school participates in the Health Promoting School initiative.

During the whole-school evaluation, teaching and learning was observed in three mainstream classrooms and in three additional support teaching settings. Questionnaires were issued to all parents and to pupils from third to sixth classes.

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:

- The school is well run and provides a balanced education in line with the principles of the primary curriculum. 93.5% of parents surveyed also consider the school to be well run.

- The principal combines his teaching and management roles diligently and has helped create a caring school environment; with the result that 96.8% of parents agree that discipline in the school is good.

- The teaching staff is a professional and dedicated team who work collaboratively for the benefit of their pupils. 90.3% of parents agree that teaching in the school is good.

- The local community has worked enthusiastically to ensure that high class facilities are available, with 96.8% agreement of parents that facilities are good in the school.

- The board of management discharges its duties effectively.

The following main recommendations are made:

- In light of the board’s articulated concern about reduced enrolments, it is recommended that a plan be devised to develop the school’s relationship with the local community further.

- It is recommended that existing good practice in relation to both communicative language and the writing process be developed further on a whole-school basis.

- It is recommended that a staff professional development programme be put in place by the board to facilitate the up-skilling of teachers more fully in line with evolving school needs.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is properly constituted and supports various aspects of school work very effectively. This includes support for the legislative context in which schools operate, as well as compliance with Departmental guidelines. The board oversees the financial affairs of the school in an efficient and transparent manner. However, it is recommended that the board should formally sign off on the accounts for future reference.

  A modern and well resourced building is provided and high quality recreational areas have been developed through much dedicated community involvement. However, during the evaluation meetings, board members expressed concern about the possibility of reduced enrolment figures in future years.

- The formal in-school management team is comprised of the principal, deputy principal and one special duties post. Appropriate duties have been agreed and are subject to periodic review. The team, together with another staff member, meets on a regular basis and all members of the management team discharge their duties effectively. In order to improve existing good practice, it is now recommended that the members of the in-school management team present end of year reports to the board.

- The school is very well resourced in support of teaching and learning. Investment in information and communication technology (ICT) is impressive and has been admirably supported by the Parents’ Association.

- The parents’ association is active and is formally affiliated to the National Parents’ Council. It has been involved in the development of a range of school policies and assists with fund-raising and also with important pupil-related activities. The practice of inviting guest speakers to discuss relevant educational issues was recommended during the meeting with members of the association.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- School planning is very good and is reviewed on a regular basis. The various plans are developed through purposeful dialogue with all staff members. Plans relating to teacher preparation, pupil reports and behaviour, together with literacy and numeracy plans, have been recently reviewed. There is also evidence of some very effective self-evaluation in relation to literacy and numeracy.

- School plans accurately reflect school practices and are clearly of assistance to individual teachers in identifying key learning targets in each curricular area. All teaching staff members complete useful long term and short term work plans in respect of all curricular areas and learning outcomes are recorded on a monthly basis.

- The 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. Most pupils (84.4%) consider their lessons to be interesting and almost all parents (93.5%) believe that their children do well in school. In addition, the board of management and the representatives of the parents’ association when interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the quality of education provided in the school.

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go han-torthúil ag leibhéil éagsúla sa scoil. Moltar go speisialta an aire a dhiritear ar an bhfíor-chumarsáid i gcás roinnt de na daltaí maraon leis an gcomhtháthú a choltaítear idir an éisteacht, an labhairt, an léitheoireacht agus an scribhneoireacht. Moltar, chomh maith, an bhéim a l eagtar ar ionchur teanga saibhir i gcuid mhaith de na ranganna. Chun cur le caighdeán na hoibre, moltar na deachleachtaithe seo a thuilleadh ar bhonn a thorbaítr thar choille.

Irish is taught in a very fruitful manner at various levels throughout the school. The attention paid to the promotion of real communication among some pupils is especially praiseworthy. The work relating to the integration of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is equally commendable. The emphasis placed on language enrichment at many levels is also commendable. In order to further improve school standards, it is recommended that the good practices referred to above be further developed on a whole-school basis.

- The development of key aural/oral skills in English is emphasised throughout the school. Accordingly many pupils display a praiseworthy ability to communicate with confidence. Fruitful emphasis is placed on reading at all levels and effective print-rich environments have been developed. Pupil questionnaires indicate that almost all pupils (90.6%) believe that they are doing well in reading. The quality of written work is also very good and the writing process is suitably emphasised throughout the school.

The school has been pro-active in the context of literacy development and the use of information and communication technology to support it at classroom level is clearly successful.

- Mathematics teaching is effective at all levels. Almost all parents (90%) believe that the school is helping their children to progress in Mathematics and most pupils (81.3%) also believe that they are doing well at Mathematics. The quality of teaching is very good generally and pupils are carefully challenged through the regular promotion of activity learning. Group work features prominently and key concepts and skills are duly reinforced. Relevant resources, including ICT, are used and good use is made of the immediate environment to explore the linkage between real life and the mathematics programme. All classes have suitable mathematics centres. In order to further enhance the mathematics teaching, it is recommended that existing good practice relating to problem solving be further developed on a whole-school basis.

- The school plan highlights the important role played by the Visual Arts in the pupils’ education. Comprehensive programmes of work are implemented at all class levels within the school and provide the pupils with creditable experiences in a range of techniques. The lessons are carefully organised and the pupils engage very positively and display commendable levels of understanding and achievement. Effective linkages are developed between this and other areas of the curriculum.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school supports the concept of inclusion and strives to fulfil its statutory duties toward pupils with learning difficulties.

- Pupils with special educational needs are successfully supported by one full-time resource teacher and by a shared learning support teacher and also by a shared resource teacher for travellers. These teachers work in close collaboration with their mainstream colleagues and with parents. Key learning objectives have been clearly identified and commendable emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy, gross motor and social skills. The focus placed on assessment for learning (AFL) and also on the mastery of specific learning targets is valuable. This success is clearly enhanced by the effective use of a wide range of learning stimuli.

Published October 2011
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 of Gurrane N.S. wish to thank the Inspector of the Department of Education & Skills for the courteous manner in which he conducted the W.S.E.

The Board of Management is pleased that the report acknowledges the strong commitment and generosity of time, effort and high standards that pervades throughout the school.

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 school community is happy to report that we have begun the recommendations of the report. The recommendations will inform future school self-evaluation and planning.