Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Muire gan Smál
Tír na Neasrach, Béal Átha na Slua,
Gaillimh
Uimhir rolla: 18043R

Date of inspection: 15 September 2010
1. Introduction

This two-teacher school with 32 pupils enrolled was built in 1959 of a Boyd Barrett school-design template. It is situated in east Galway, some eight kilometres north-east of Portumna. Typically the classrooms are small in size and restrict the level of movement and activities that the pupils can engage in. There is one additional pre-fabricated building used for learning-support services, a lined play area and small games field to the rear of the school. There is an organic vegetable garden to the front of the building. The school building and grounds have been well maintained over the years and are in good condition. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following are the <strong>main strengths</strong> of the work of the school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The quality of communication and interaction with parents and other members of the school community is very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The good behaviour and co-operation of the pupils is commendable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a positive, effective learning environment in the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very good attainment levels are achieved in standardised tests in literacy and numeracy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following <strong>main recommendations</strong> are made:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A plan for the refurbishing of the school building should be prepared, as prioritised by the board of management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The school plan should be reviewed and the parents’ association should be partners in this process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The level and use of information and communications technology (ICT), library facilities and educational resources in the school should be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The needs of pupils with exceptionally high achievement should be addressed through the general allocation for learning support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of work engaged in by the board of management is good. The board is appropriately constituted. Officers are allocated specific responsibilities, good budgetary controls are in place and accounts are regularly audited. The board and the parents’
association are in regular contact. They are currently collaborating on a school refurbishment programme.

• The school building, although well maintained and newly painted, requires upgrading and refurbishment and a planned approach to this identified priority is recommended.

• The board has discussed the school plan and has ratified the various aspects of the plan currently in use. Elements of the school plan now require updating, however, to reflect legislative changes and best practice, particularly in the areas of school enrolment, provision and use of ICT, ensuring adequate library resources and the differentiation of teaching strategies to cater for the range of pupil ability.

• The quality of the work of the in-school management team is good. Pupils are ensured access to a broad curriculum and are very well prepared for post-primary education. The principal and post holder are both very efficient and diligent and ensure that the pupils attain very high standards.

• The role ascribed to the post holder in the school plan needs to be amended, to include pastoral, organisational and curricular aspects and to reflect the evolving needs of the school.

• The in-school management team is open and flexible in taking on new tasks. The members are currently considering the different options for curriculum delivery to second class, in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of pupils. There are no pupils in third or sixth class.

• The quality of the management of resources is good. However further investment in ICT is now required as well as an operational plan for its use. Further investment in library and educational resources is also required.

• The quality of communication between the different stakeholders in this school is very good. Parents indicated at the pre-evaluation meeting that they were very satisfied with the way the school is operating, both in the management of pupils and in curriculum delivery.

• The quality of rapport between the pupils and teachers is very good. They discuss school issues openly and cognisance is taken of pupils' opinions in making school decisions. Pupils are well supported in their social and skills development.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is good. The board of management and the teaching staff engage collaboratively in this process. The teaching staff generally drafts the policies and submits them to the board for discussion, amendments and ratification. The parents’ association is not yet included in this process.

• The school plan is available to parents for their perusal during parent teacher meetings. Access to the school plan through a school website would enhance parents' knowledge and appreciation of school policies and processes. It would also enable wider consultation in the planning process.
A large number of organisational and curricular plans have been generated and presented in two volumes. A complete list of contents of the respective volumes should be included in the folders for easy reference. The review dates should be clearly marked at the beginning of each individual plan.

Some aspects of the plan now require review and this should include the parents’ association as one of the reviewing parties.

Individual classroom planning is influenced largely by the text-books in use and other commercially produced programmes. Implementing differentiation strategies in both classrooms would enhance pupils’ feelings of success even further.

Developing pupils’ comprehension skills has been very successfully targeted over the last three years. There has been a significant improvement in pupils’ attainment in standardised tests as a result. Developing pupils’ spelling ability is a learning target for the next year.

The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation is very good. The practices engaged in should be formally included in the methodologies section of the school plan.

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 is very good in this school. The pupils’ questionnaire analysis indicates that pupils believe themselves to be receiving an excellent education programme and that they are enjoying school. The staff is to be congratulated on the standards attained in literacy and numeracy in this school.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Gaeilge is good in this school. The pupils’ spirit of participation and enjoyment is evident in the way the language is taught and the development of the pupils’ confidence and personal qualities is integral to
the practice. A structured developmental programme is provided in the junior section of
the school and this is effectively augmented in the senior section.

Pupils achieve a good standard in reading and writing in Irish. Emphasis is placed on
developing higher-order thinking skills and pupils' work is regularly monitored. It would be
worthwhile to make use of the 'Séideán Si' language programme in this school as well as
investing significantly in library books in Irish.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good, as
  reflected in standardised tests. Due emphasis is placed on developing oral-language
  skills and phonological awareness as well as on structured reading and writing
  programmes of work. Pupils' work is regularly monitored and learning-support services
  further enhance pupil achievement.

- Comprehension skills and higher-order thinking skills are well developed and pupils
  achieve creditable standards relative to their abilities. Further investment in library
  facilities and home-school supportive programmes could further enhance the work
  practices.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good, as
  indicated by standardised tests. A specific programme of work is outlined in the school
  plan and school text-books guide its sequencing. Mental work is a regular feature in all
  classrooms. Prediction and estimation skills are developed and ongoing reference is
  made to the terminology of mathematics.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is fair. The school plan
  outlines the curricular framework in Music and good use is made of commercial
  programmes to supplement song-singing and classroom practice. Exposure to music
  from different cultures and styles is facilitated and exercises in tempo, pitch, timbre and
dynamic are featured.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- This school has a general learning-support allocation of 7.5 hours per week. All of the
  pupils receiving learning support achieve above the twelfth percentile in standardised
  tests.

- Five pupils receive strategic learning support and the other groups attending learning
  support classes receive supplementary teaching in phonics and comprehension skills. In
  view of the availability of discretionary time in the general allocation, it is recommended
  that supplementary teaching be provided also for pupils with exceptionally high
  achievement.

Published, June 2011
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M. of Tiernascragh N.S. wish to thank the inspector for his fair and thorough evaluation of the work of the teachers, pupils, parents and B.O.M. We are pleased that he rightly pointed out that many of our shortcomings can be attributed to the lack of facilities. We are now in the process of providing some of these facilities thanks to the agreement of the DES to provide some funding. We are happy that the report reflects the hard work and dedication of all those associated with Tiernascragh N.S.

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

Interactive white boards have been installed in both classrooms and further I.T. work is being pursued. The Learning support teacher is now being employed to further challenge the high achievers in the classes. The school plan is being reviewed with all the relevant partners.