Leugh National School
Thurles, Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla: 18213Q

Date of inspection: 9 December 2010
1. Introduction

Leugh National School is a co-educational primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. The school enrolment has increased from fifty-two pupils in 2009 to seventy pupils in the current school year. It has three mainstream class teachers. The last school inspection was undertaken in 2000 and all three members of the staff have been appointed since that date.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in December 2010. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Science. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:

- The school is managed effectively by a dedicated board of management.
- The principal undertakes the day to day management of the school with energy and enthusiasm.
- The teachers are hardworking and committed to the holistic development of their pupils and the creation of a warm, positive climate in the school. The teachers are well-supported by the board and the parents.
- In general, good lessons were observed at each class level and the standards achieved in English and Mathematics are broadly in line with national achievement trends.
- Pupils’ behaviour is very good and their engagement in learning activities and in school life is highly commendable.
- Commendable progress has been made in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as a teaching resource.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board of management should take the necessary and relevant steps to secure the provision of appropriate accommodation for the growing population of this school.
- Ba chóir tuilleadh béime a chur ar fhorbairt na scileanna cumarsáide sa Ghaeilge agus inniúlacht na ndaltaí san obair scríofa a threísiú. Further emphasis should be placed on the development of communication skills in Irish and the pupils’ achievement in written work should be strengthened.
- Additional attention needs to be given to curriculum leadership in the school and to the further development of whole-school planning processes, including school self-evaluation and review.
- The role of textbooks in the provision of learning experiences should be reviewed.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management manages the school effectively. Good working relationships among the staff, the board and the parents are fostered and a positive climate pervades the school.

- The board has undertaken improvements to the school grounds and provides a good range of resources to support teaching and learning. However, the main school building and the temporary accommodation are in need of extension and refurbishment. The board of management needs to be proactive in taking the necessary and appropriate steps to secure appropriate accommodation for this developing school. It is recommended that the original dual desks be replaced.

- The work of the school is supported by a committed and active parents’ association that is engaged in the life of the school. Communication between home and school is commendable.

- The principal and deputy principal work effectively as a team and decision-making is collaborative. Aspects of school leadership such as communication, the involvement of parents in the life of the school, links within the wider school community and the pastoral care roles are well-established. The management of the school gives very good attention to the holistic development of the pupils. Further attention to whole-school planning and the instructional leadership role is advised. Responsibilities for leading areas of the curriculum should be included in the range of duties assigned to the deputy principal.

- The board of management has reviewed and ratified organisational policies and curricular plans. It is advised that the board discuss whole-school planning matters regularly at its meetings.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the whole-school planning process is satisfactory. The board and the staff need to review organisational policies and curricular plans on a regular basis and to devise an action plan that clearly states the priorities of the school in relation to teaching and learning and organisational issues.

- All teachers devise long-term and short-term plans. In general these plans are satisfactory and some good planning was reviewed during the evaluation. At some class levels, the closer alignment of short-term plans with the Primary School Curriculum (1999) is recommended. There is potential for monthly progress reports (cuntais mhíosula) to be used for the purpose of overseeing continuity and progression and curriculum implementation throughout the school.

- The teachers are commended for their frequent, informal meetings to discuss school matters and the learning needs of the pupils. Pupils’ strengths and areas for development are identified by teachers and appropriate supports are provided. In order to further develop the school’s ability to self-evaluate, the staff is advised to maintain a strong focus on promoting continuous review of teaching and learning and to analyse whole-school assessment data more systematically in order to enrich the provision for pupils.

- 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

- During the evaluation, pupils’ engagement in the learning activities was exemplary. The teachers demonstrate commendable concern for the care and welfare of the pupils in their care.

- Generally, the teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory in the school and different methodologies were observed in the lessons at each class level. The pupils know appropriate vocabulary. It is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on the achievement of pupils in communicating and that different situations be created for the pupils to communication on a more regular basis during Irish lessons and during the school day. The content of the reading and writing lessons is based on the textbooks. The pupils read accurately and they can write a short paragraph. It is recommended that further development of pupils’ written work be undertaken and writing tasks be practised on a more regular basis. It is advised that the staff review the role of the textbook in the implementation of the programme.

- In general, the quality of teaching in English is good. Oral language is developed at each class level and good attention is given to the development of oral skills in other areas of the curriculum. A satisfactory range of poetry is explored and in some classes poems are memorised. Good attention is given to phonics and the development of phonological skills in the infant classes. Commendable emphasis is placed on reading a range of parallel readers in the infant classes and pupils in all classes are encouraged by their teachers to read independently on a daily basis. While the pupils’ reading is generally satisfactory, it is recommended that additional attention should be given to the teaching of specific reading skills and comprehension strategies. Writing skills are developed systematically throughout the school and the standard of presentation of pupils’ work is commendable. Further opportunities for the pupils to write for different purposes are recommended and the implementation of a programme such as First Steps Writing is advised.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. The lessons are purposeful and an appropriate range of resources and methodologies is used to explore mathematical concepts. Mental mathematics should be further emphasised in lessons in some class settings.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is good. Commendable attention is given to the active engagement of pupils in a range of activities across the strand units and the skills of working scientifically are developed appropriately. The school’s engagement in
the Green-Schools programme is commendable. It is advised, that as far as is practical, common themes and topics should be explored in each class setting with extension activities provided for the senior and more able pupils.

- The teachers are hard-working and dedicated and are successful in using a range of methodologies in their teaching. Commendable progress has been made in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as a teaching resource. The role of the textbooks in the implementation of the curriculum in different subject areas should be reviewed.

- Questionnaires completed by parents indicate that there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning in the school. A broad range of curricular and extracurricular activities is provided for the pupils.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of the teaching supports for pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties is satisfactory. Individual support is provided to two pupils and supports are provided for pupils within the classroom settings in English and Mathematics. In some instances the pupils in the mainstream class settings are in the average/above average achievement group and do not meet the criteria for receiving learning support. This practice should be reviewed and be replaced with an early intervention programme focusing on pupils in infants and in first class who have identified learning needs.

- The quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils is good and the pupils are making satisfactory progress.

- The support teachers’ planning is satisfactory. The identification of more specific learning targets and the development of weekly plans is recommended in these settings. Programmes for pupils with special educational needs should be closely aligned with the recommendations of psychologists and other professionals.