An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Roscomroe
Kinnity, Co Offaly.

Uimhir rolla: 18537T

Date of inspection: 28 February, 2011
1. Introduction

This two teacher Boyd Barrett school is under the patronage of the Dioceses of Killaloe with 33 pupils enrolled and was built in 1961. It is situated in the heel of the Slieve Bloom mountains south-west Offaly some eight miles north-east of Roscrea. Typically the classrooms are small in size and restrict the level of movement and activities that pupils can engage in. There is a lined play area and an open shelter beside the school and a games field to the rear of the school. The school building and grounds have been well maintained over the years and are in good condition. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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 is effective in maintaining and improving the current school accommodation and facilities.
- The quality of communication and interaction with parents and other members of the school community are very good.
- The school principal and staff are hard working and effective and have successfully cultured a caring and developmental learning environment for the pupils.
- The courtesy, work application and co-operation of the pupils are commendable.
- The school has engaged in the process of self evaluation and commendable progress is being made in this regard.
- Good attainment levels are achieved in standardised tests in literacy and numeracy.

The following main recommendations are made:

- There is a need to prepare a plan for the refurbishing of the school building as prioritised by the board of management.
- There is a need to upgrade the school plan in the areas listed in the body of this report.
- The school should review and upgrade the level and use of information and communication technology (ICT), library facilities and educational resources in the school, as resources permit.
- An annual review of the learning-support service in the cluster of schools, as outlined in the Learning-Support Guidelines is recommended.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of work engaged in by the board of management is good. The board is duly constituted under the rules of the Department, officers are allocated responsibilities and duties are delegated between meetings. Although good budgetary controls are in place, a written statement of accounts should be presented to board meetings and annual accounts should be certified and presented to the school partners at the end of every school year. The board and parents association are in regular contact and they are currently collaborating on a school refurbishment programme.

- The school building although well maintained now 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 plan now require updating to reflect necessary changes and best practice. A structured planned system is now required to enable parents to peruse and comment on the school plan. Placing the plan on a school website would prove useful in this regard.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very 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 efficient and diligent and ensure that the pupils in the main attain high standards.

- The quality of the management of resources is good. However as resources become available, further investment is required in the access and use of whiteboards and other ICT equipment and in ensuring adequate library resources in both languages.

- The quality of communication between the partners in this school is very good. Parents indicated at the pre-evaluation meeting and in questionnaire responses 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 pupils are consulted 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 draft the policies and submit them to the board for discussion, amendments and ratification.

- 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 reflects a thematic approach to monthly time blocks. Other influences include school texts, a range of commercially produced programmes and supplementary references. Developing pupils’ comprehension skills has been targeted over the last three years. Implementing differentiation strategies is practised in both classrooms and pupils experience feelings of success in their learning.

There has been a significant improvement in pupils’ attainment in standardised tests. Developing pupils spelling ability is a learning target for the next year.

The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation is good. The practices engaged in should be formally included in the school plan. It is recommended that the DEIS templates should be used to guide and track the improvements being attained.

Child protection policy and procedures

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 good in this school. The pupils’ questionnaire analysis reveals a body of pupils that feel they are doing well and that 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 Sí’ 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 enhance the work practices.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. A specific programme of work is outlined in the school plan and school textbooks and monthly thematic approaches guide its sequencing. Mental work and problem solving is a regular feature in all classrooms. Prediction and estimation skills, the use of concrete materials, revision and regular opportunities to engage in co-operative learning are featured in classroom activities. Pupils display an ability to discuss concepts using appropriate mathematical terminology.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Physical Education is good although frequently weather dependent due to the lack of amenities. Warm up and cooling down drills are structured into pupils routines and regular indoor and outdoor activities are organised. Pupils attend a leisure centre in Roscrea for aquatics. The school plan outlines the curricular framework in physical education and good use is made of extra-curricular programmes to supplement classroom practice.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The learning-support service is arranged between the two primary schools: SN Roscomroe (enrolment 33 pupils) and a larger school with approximately 120 pupils. SN Roscomroe currently has a general learning-support allocation of 2.5 hours per week. As indicated in Appendix 4 of circular 02/05, the procedures outlined in the Learning-Support Guidelines (Department of Education and Science 2000) continue to apply and this includes the practice of arranging an annual meeting to review the needs of pupils in each school in a cluster. Such a review should be undertaken to ensure that the learning-support services provided are directed towards those pupils who have the greatest need.

- A small number of pupils receive strategic learning support and the other groups supported by the learning-support service receive supplementary classroom teaching in phonics and comprehension skills. All of the pupils receiving learning support achieve above the twelfth percentile in standardised tests. A number of very good practises are established including the use of active and stimulating resources. Further programmes, as well as differentiated supports for high achievers, should be included in an extended programme of supports.

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