Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Patrick’s NS
Inch, Killeagh,
Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 18567F

Date of inspection: 7 April 2010
1. Introduction

St. Patrick’s is a mixed national school in the townland of Inch and approximately seven kilometres from the village of Killeagh in East Cork. The school is under the patronage of the Apostolic Administrator of Cashel and Emly. Since the last school report was written in 2002 the school has experienced a steady growth in pupil numbers and now stands at 152. 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 board of management and parents are very supportive of the school.
- The principal succeeds in creating a warm, welcoming and caring environment in the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good.
- Standards in literacy and numeracy indicate pupils are making good and very good progress respectively. Staff has introduced a number of worthy initiatives to further develop literacy levels in the school.
- The standard of teaching, learning and pupils’ achievement in Music is very high.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The principal is advised to develop his strategic and instructional leadership role further.
- An action planning process should be devised that will facilitate a regular review and development of policies.
- It is recommended that the periods of withdrawal from class be reduced and that further opportunities for in-class support and differentiated learning be identified.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and supports the school in a competent manner. Board members have been assigned specific tasks and these are carried out with due diligence and commitment. A financial report is presented at meetings and the board is reminded to submit this report for external certification.

- The principal succeeds in creating a warm, caring, and welcoming school environment. He is commended in establishing the opportunity for pupils to develop their talents in instrumental Music. the principal is encouraged to avail of the administrative days to develop his strategic and leadership role further.
• The deputy principal and post-holders demonstrate a noteworthy application to addressing the needs of the school. The challenge for school management is to ensure a balance of curricular, pastoral and organisational responsibilities and in this way to develop their instructional leadership role.

• The school has a strong and committed parents' association and parents generously give of their time in contributing to school life. Regular contact is maintained between the school and home in ensuring parents are kept informed of school events. Parents' involvement to date in policy development is limited and staff is advised to consult regularly with parents to ensure the widest possible perspective. The results of the parent questionnaires indicate parents are very pleased with the standard of teaching and learning in the school.

• The school is well maintained both externally and internally with the provision of a school garden and with displays of pupils' work. The school is well resourced in terms of information and communication technology (ICT). Staff is advised to compile an inventory of educational equipment and to identify a central storage area to facilitate ease of access. Senior management is encouraged to devise a policy on staff rotation to ensure staff is exposed to a variety of teaching experiences. The teachers are complimented on their willingness to get involved in all aspects of school life and they are proactive in addressing the needs of the children.

• Pupils were courteous and respectful during the WSE. They are managed in a caring and competent manner by staff. Their recreational needs are amply catered for through a variety of sporting activity. The school is congratulated on its high attendance levels of 93%. The results of pupil questionnaires indicate pupils are very positively disposed to school life. Staff might usefully look at pupil responses to their use of ICT and to their engagement in group activity.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• Curricular and organisation policies are informative and serve as a useful guide to classroom practice. Staff is advised to initiate an action planning process that will facilitate a regular review and development of policies. Staff is also encouraged to engage in school self-evaluation practices on a formal basis and to utilise self-evaluation as a mechanism for continued development.

• A variety of approaches is adopted in compiling long-term and short-term plans. There is a need to agree an approach to individual teachers' planning that will inform classroom practice and comply with the terms of Rule 126. Individual teacher planning should also be guided by the school plan. An alternative to the current system of recording the monthly progress records should be considered.

• 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 and school staff; 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. Management is advised to present the child protection policy formally to parents.
5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good. Standardised test scores in literacy and numeracy indicate pupils are making good and very good progress respectively.

- Good strategies are utilised to promote spoken Irish among the pupils. The interactive white-board and the compact disc were used productively to complement the learning. The pupils’ understanding was developed skillfully with a regular linkage of lesson content to the child’s own experience. A print-rich learning environment was created in many classrooms. In the junior classes the children are encouraged to develop their writing skills through a series of worthwhile writing activities. Overall the work is recorded neatly. In the interests of developing writing further, free writing should be introduced. The children read fluently. A wider range of reading material is advised to improve the pupils’ reading skills further. The challenge for the school going forward is to promote spoken Irish throughout the school. Recitation should be promoted regularly.

- In many classes, discrete oral language lessons in English are developed effectively. Lessons are linked productively to other curricular areas and have a clear focus. Poetry is exploited to varying degrees and it is recommended that all pupils get the opportunity to recite poetry. A whole-school approach should now be developed in the area of oral language development. Reading is regularly promoted as a pleasurable past-time in the school. The staff has introduced a number of valuable initiatives, including Literacy Lift-Off, and focussed writing and spelling exercises. A print-rich learning environment was in evidence in some classrooms and this good practice should be extended. The pupils’ skills are developed from an early age with productive engagement in the Jolly Phonics programme, in word attack exercises and in vocabulary extension. Productive use is made of story, of big books and the novel. The standard of writing was very good and pupils are encouraged to write in a variety of genres. There is a good focus on presentation and on developing good handwriting techniques. Free writing activity is a feature in some classes. There is regular monitoring of pupils’ work by teachers with positive and developmental comments recorded.

- Observed lessons in Mathematics commenced regularly with mental arithmetic activity and this approach was used consistently for revision and consolidation purposes. Lessons were child-centred and active learning was promoted with effective use of concrete material. The learning programmes were suitably differentiated with pupils working in targeted groups. The interactive white-board was used productively to complement learning and pupils in the infant classes had access to number lines as an aid to learning. Topics and activities were regularly linked to pupils’ own experience in order to develop understanding. There was a good emphasis on talk and discussion during problem-solving activity. A whole-school approach to teaching the language of Mathematics is necessary. Maths for Fun has been introduced in infants as an effective
early intervention strategy. Pupils have regular opportunities to record in copybooks and a high standard is achieved. A greater consistency in the selection of textbooks and in the use of calculators is advised.

- Music is taught to a very high standard. Pupils perform to a high level in instrumental play and they have access to a wide range of instruments. They receive additional tuition from an external musician attached to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. This work is further developed and reinforced at classroom level. Breadth and balance is achieved across all strands. Regular reference is made to the different components of the music curriculum with song-singing and music appreciation engaged in as pleasurable exercises.

- The staff engages in a wide variety of assessment procedures. Teachers maintain assessment folders and examples of pupil self-assessment are a commendable feature in one particular setting. Standardised test results are analysed routinely and inform teaching and learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Teachers demonstrate a clear commitment to the welfare of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Clear targets are set in structured individual education plans (IEP) and in individual profile and learning programmes (IPLP). Targets are reviewed at regular intervals and are informed by regular assessment. Following assessment, focussed programmes of work are developed and matched to identified learning needs. A greater detail should be recorded in tracking pupils’ progress, most particularly in Literacy Lift Off. It is recommended that the periods of withdrawal from class be reduced and that further opportunities for in-class support and differentiated learning be identified. The special needs assistants are conscientious and contribute to the school’s team approach.

Published, February 2012