Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Caragh NS
Caragh, Naas, County Kildare.
Uimhir rolla: 18654A

Date of inspection: 24 November 2011
1. **Introduction**

Caragh NS is located in the village of Caragh, north west of Naas in County Kildare. The school has grown steadily in recent years and has an enrolment of 505 pupils. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. The holistic development and pastoral care of the pupils is espoused in the school’s mission statement. Pupil attendance rates are very high. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in twelve mainstream class settings and four support teaching settings. The board of management 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**

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<th>The following are the <strong>main strengths</strong> of the work of the school:</th>
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<td>• The school is managed by a dedicated and well-informed board of management.</td>
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<td>• The principal provides highly effective leadership for the school and is committed to providing optimal teaching, learning and pastoral care for the pupils.</td>
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<td>• Pupils are courteous and well behaved and apply themselves to their work with pride and interest.</td>
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<td>• Teachers display very effective and reflective teaching and classroom management skills.</td>
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<td>• School self-evaluation practices impact positively on school development.</td>
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<td>• Teaching and learning in Mathematics, English and Irish are of a high standard.</td>
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<td>• Support for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high standard.</td>
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<th>The following <strong>main recommendations</strong> are made:</th>
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<td>• The school should devise further differentiation strategies to support a wider range of pupil abilities.</td>
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<td>• The school should review the history plan to ensure the systematic development of a wider range of history skills and a deeper engagement with the teaching and learning of local history.</td>
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3. **Quality of School Management**

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Board members share their specific talents very generously to purposefully support the management and long-term development of the school. Accounts of income and expenditure are carefully maintained and detailed records and budgetary projections are presented frequently to the board. It is recommended that school accounts be audited or certified annually. Further attention to the maintenance of roll books and school registers is also recommended. The board is commended for its active role in the management of the recent school extension and refurbishment.
• The quality of leadership within the school is very good. The principal demonstrates highly effective leadership skills. His shared vision for the holistic development of the pupils is central to the successful creation of a caring and child-centred collaborative learning community. His empowering and reflective leadership style underpins the promotion of successful, innovative and purposeful educational initiatives.

• The principal works closely with the deputy principal who provides a high level of organisational, administrative and curricular leadership within the school. The in-school management team undertake their duties professionally. The further strengthening of their role in the ongoing monitoring and review of curriculum implementation is advised.

• The parents’ association is praised for its commitment and support for the school. Parents have been involved in specific curricular projects and in policy formulation. This is very good practice and should be continued.

• Pupil management is very good. Pupils’ views have contributed to the development of the school’s mission statement. This is commendable. The school should explore ways of affording pupils a greater voice in general school affairs. Pupils’ holistic development is facilitated through their participation in a diverse range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The transition to post-primary school is carefully managed and indicates a high level of insight and appropriate awareness of pupils’ needs.

• Communication strategies are very effective and parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the level of information provided with regard to their children’s progress.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The process of school self-evaluation is well-developed in this school. Priorities identified with regard to Mathematics have resulted in the organisation of continuing professional development for teachers and targeted initiatives within the school. The review of data and feedback from parents and pupils assists the school with the monitoring of particular initiatives.

• Well-devised organisational policies are successful in contributing to the efficient and effective management of the school. A policy with regard to exemptions from Irish should now be devised. The review dates for specific policies should also be included in the school’s action plan.

• The quality of whole-school curriculum planning is generally very good, and the plans are specific to the context of the school. A review of the history plan is recommended.

• Teachers plan and prepare for their teaching in an effective manner. A whole-school approach to the maintenance of monthly progress records is evident. Commendably, many teachers document learning outcomes rather than content covered. This good practice should be built upon further at whole-school level.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006 and 0062/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.
5. **Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement**

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers display effective and well-developed reflective teaching and classroom management skills. Pupils are provided with a range of learning experiences during well-structured and appropriately paced lessons. Teachers engage in whole-class teaching and opportunities for pair and group work are provided appropriately. Further differentiation strategies should be developed to ensure that programmes of work support and challenge the different needs of pupils. A noteworthy feature of practice in many classrooms is the wide range of successful consolidation strategies in use by teachers.

- A range of appropriate assessment strategies are implemented at whole-school level. There is a varied approach to assessment at classroom level. Where very good practice was noted, teachers’ analysis of the data impacted directly on their programmes of work. This effective practice should be emulated throughout the school.

- Tá ardchaighdeán ag baint le teagasc agus le foighthaim na Gaeilge. Forbráitear scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí go córasach ó rang go rang. Tá sé ar chumas formhór na ndaltaí abairtí a structúrú go cruinn, na briathra a láimh seáil go cumasach ag an Ghaeilge a úsáid go neamhspleách. Léann na daltaí go cruinn sna meánranganna agus sna hard-ranganna agus tugtar faoi deara go bhfuil tuiscint an-mhaith ag a bhformhór. Chun tógáil ar an dea-chleachtas seo, b’thuig an scóp agus eispéireas na léitheoireachta a leathnú ar bhonn uile scoile agus an fhoghlaim a bhunú ar théamaí faoi leith. Soláthraithe deisíonna do na daltaí tabhairt faoi scribhneoireacht chruthaitheach. B’tuig an dea-chleachtas seo a threisiú a thuilleadh.

- A high standard of teaching and learning in Irish is evident. Pupils’ communication skills are systematically developed from class to class. The majority of pupils are able to structure sentences correctly, handle verbs capably and use Irish independently. Pupils in the middle and senior classes read correctly and the majority have very good understanding of the reading content. To build on this effective practice, the scope and experience of the pupils’ reading should be extended on a whole-school basis and the reading should be based around specific themes. Creative writing opportunities are provided for the pupils. This effective practice should be further embedded.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high quality. Careful attention is afforded to the development of pupils’ oral language skills. Pupils have access to a wide range of differentiated reading materials. Achievement in standardised reading assessment is very high for many pupils. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of pupils’ writing skills. Pupils have opportunities to edit and redraft their work and write independently on a range of topics of interest to themselves. To add impetus to this effective practice, a cyclical approach to the selection of specific genres is advised at whole-school level. A review of the implementation of the school’s policy on penmanship and presentation is also advised.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The analysis and use of information collated from school-based assessment data underpins successful initiatives in the delivery of the mathematics curriculum. A whole-school approach to problem solving is evident. Lessons are well structured and emphasis is placed on practical activities. Well-managed group work was noted in a number of settings. Effective use is made of the pupils’ environment to revise and explore concepts...
across the strands. The consolidation of learning outcomes in many classrooms is highly commendable. Pupils’ attainment in Mathematics is very good.

- Some very good lessons in History were observed during the evaluation. Lessons were appropriately pitched, and opportunities for talk and discussion and the use of group work were central to the lessons evaluated. The school is amassing a suitable range of resources to support the implementation of the history curriculum. However, there is scope for further development regarding teaching and learning in History at a whole-school level. A review of the whole-school plan for History is recommended to ensure the systematic development of a wider range of skills. Integral to this, an audit of the local environment should be undertaken to ensure that a broad, balanced and spiral approach underpins pupils’ learning outcomes in local history. A whole-school approach to the use of timelines is also recommended.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of planning and provision for pupils in receipt of additional support is of a very high standard. Individual plans for pupils are devised following consultation with relevant professionals and also following consultation with parents. Clearly stated long-term and short-term objectives are documented for pupils in receipt of support and these are clearly based on pupils’ prioritised learning needs. Lessons observed were effectively structured with a focus on pupils’ learning needs. The incremental development of pupils’ skills through the implementation of a range of suitable methodologies was noted. Effective collaboration between classroom teachers and support teachers is evident and pupils’ progress is carefully documented.

- A book rental scheme minimises costs for parents. School-based initiatives provide sensitive support for pupils who present with additional needs.

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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 Caragh N.S. welcomes the publication of the Whole School Evaluation report.

It is noted with satisfaction that all of the quality areas were reported on most favourably and the report contains a range of complementary and affirmative observations in this regard. The main strengths of the work of the school are set out in Section 2 of the report and these are a reflection of the professionalism, dedication and leadership of the school community. Additionally, it is noted that the report acknowledges the valued contribution of the parents’ association and the practical involvement of parents in terms of specific curricular projects and policy formulation. The Board wishes to acknowledge the professionalism and courtesy of the inspection team in their interactions with all elements of the school.

Overall, the Board of Management of Caragh NS is most gratified with and reassured by this report.

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 Board of Management will work with the school to implement the recommendations contained in the report. Several have already been implemented and others are being built into our three year plan. These recommendations will support the ongoing development of the school.