Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Iosaf
Leitir, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 18818E

Date of inspection: 20 October 2011
1. Introduction

Leitir NS is a co-educational rural school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Tuam, situated eight kilometres north-west of Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Currently, the school has two mainstream class teachers and twenty-four pupils are enrolled. The school is well maintained and very attractively presented.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Physical Education. 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

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

- The principal works in a diligent and committed manner and provides effective leadership to the school community.
- The staff members work very well together and are positive and encouraging in their interactions with pupils.
- Pupils are courteous and polite and are enthusiastic learners.
- Very good standards of teaching and learning were observed in all classrooms.
- Very good practice was observed in the delivery of special education.
- Useful whole-school approaches have been developed in assessing pupil progress.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Posts of responsibility should be reviewed to ensure that current priorities for the school are reflected in the duties assigned.
- The very good practice observed, whereby learning tasks in literacy and numeracy are closely linked with individual pupil ability levels, should be extended throughout the school.
- It is recommended that the current staffing arrangement be reviewed to ensure that there is a more equitable distribution of pupils in the mainstream classes.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is highly committed to the school. The board has recently engaged in evaluating pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy. This good practice is highly commended.

- The principal is highly commended for the professional and enthusiastic manner in which she fulfils her duties. She has succeeded in promoting a culture of teamwork and partnership. At present, the in-school management team operates on an informal basis. It is recommended that the post of responsibility be reviewed and that current priorities for the school be reflected in the duties assigned.

- The quality of the management of resources is good. Classrooms are well resourced and very attractively presented with effective use being made of the recently installed teaching laptops and digital projectors. The board should review the current staffing arrangements to ensure that, as far as possible, there is an equitable distribution of pupils in the two mainstream classrooms in the school.

- The school building lacks facilities such as a principal’s office and storage space. The current staff room is very cramped. Additional accommodation is required. The board should explore the options available to it to address these matters, liaising with the Department of Education and Skills as appropriate.

- The management of pupils in this school is very good. Pupils demonstrate very high levels of co-operation while engaging in group work. Their responses in the pupil questionnaires indicate a high level of pupil satisfaction with the school.

- The management of relations and communication with the school community is very effective. The school provides regular newsletters to ensure parents are informed about school events. Parents indicate that they are very happy with the school and with the education provided for their children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. The school plan is clear and specific to the needs of this multi-grade setting. The school has begun the process of evaluating whole-school effectiveness through the analysis of assessment data. This good work is highly commended.

- All teachers provide good quality individual classroom planning with an agreed format for recording progress. The quality of teacher planning in special education settings is particularly impressive.

- 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 and learning and pupil achievement is very good. During the evaluation, very effective methodologies that ensured a high level of pupil engagement were observed. In some classes, learning tasks in literacy and numeracy were closely linked to pupil ability levels and lesson content was differentiated appropriately to meet the needs of individual pupils. This very good practice, which is highly commended, should now be extended throughout the school.

- Tá cáiliocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnótha chtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cuirtear béim cheart ar chothú grá don teanga. Sa seomra sóisearacha baintear úsáid mhaith as drámaíocht chun deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí a scileanna cumarsáide a threisiú. Sa seomra sinsearacha bhí na daltaí in ann ceisteanna a chur agus brithra a láimhseáil. Baintear úsáid mhaith as an nGaeilge mar theanga bhainistíochta i ngach seomra.

  *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. An appropriate emphasis is placed on fostering a love of the language. In the junior room good use is made of drama to provide the pupils with opportunities to enrich their communication skills. In the senior room pupils were able to pose questions and manipulate verbs. Irish is used effectively as the language for classroom management in all classrooms.*

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. In the senior classes, the use of the class novel is very well managed with structured activities provided to enhance pupils’ literacy skills. In the junior classes, very effective in-class support activities ensure that all pupils are enabled to reach an appropriate standard in literacy. It is recommended that pupils be encouraged to develop cursive script at an earlier age and that the presentation of pupils’ written work be improved.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Teaching in Mathematics was clear and well-structured with effective in-class support provided. The school should now place a greater emphasis on oral Mathematics, with frequent revision of topics previously covered. It is recommended that an agreed problem solving strategy be devised on a whole-school basis.

- Although the school does not have an indoor play space, effective practice was observed in Physical Education. A very worthwhile emphasis was placed on talk and discussion. Well planned lessons ensured a high level of pupil engagement.

- Some very effective whole-school approaches to assessment were observed during the course of the evaluation. Teachers are well informed about pupil progress and are aware of individual strengths and weaknesses. Individual pupil attainments in literacy and numeracy are reviewed in tandem with pupil performance in other standardised tests. It is recommended that a system for tracking progress year on year be devised.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- This is an inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with special educational needs. The school has a long history of providing education for pupils with different needs and all teachers have well developed skills in this area.

- Very high quality and innovative teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs were observed during the course of the evaluation. Very good quality individual education plans have been devised. Targets were carefully chosen and
were derived from the specialist reports available. Copies of these plans should be provided to parents.

- In-class support strategies are well developed in this school. This helps to ensure the dissemination of specialist teaching skills to the whole staff. This good practice is highly commended.

- In the special education setting, regular assessment of progress and meticulous record keeping ensure that pupil progress is carefully monitored. These records indicate that pupils are making satisfactory progress.
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 and Staff of Leitir N.S. are delighted with our positive WSE report. We found the experience to be a positive and affirming one. We would also like to express our gratitude to the inspector for the professional manner in which she conducted the evaluation.

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

Since the evaluation the Board are acting on the recommendations in the report.