Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Barryroe National School,
Lislevane, Bandon, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 19249T

Date of inspection: 4 May 2011
1. Introduction

Barryroe NS is a rural, co-educational national school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. Currently, there are 184 pupils enrolled. General enrolment patterns are stable and levels of attendance are high. 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.

This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation which focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school enjoys the support and trust of the local community.
- The school is managed effectively and is capably led.
- The welfare and the holistic education of pupils are central to the decision-making processes of both management and staff.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the board develop a three-year plan to address the infrastructural needs of the school.
- It is recommended that in-school management practices are reviewed and that an annual process of review and prioritisation be implemented within the context of a school improvement agenda.
- It is recommended that agreed school planning templates are devised. These should facilitate greater clarity of interpretation and curriculum continuity.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is effective. Members play an active role in school business and facilitate an agenda for school improvement. The administrative and financial affairs of the school are capably managed. However, because of increased enrolment and the inclusion of a Speech and Language Unit in the school, there is an emerging need to address the limitations of the school building. Infrastructural changes might include a general purposes room, additional resource rooms, an office for the principal and a staffroom or meeting room. It is recommended that the board agree on a timeframe within which these improvements could be achieved.
• The in-school management team is comprised of the principal, deputy principal and the holders of two special duties posts, all of whom contribute to the effective running of the school. Members are assigned specific duties which they perform responsibly and information is disseminated effectively throughout the school community. In order to further improve existing practice, it is recommended that assigned duties are reviewed annually, prioritised and set within a school improvement framework. It is also recommended that, above and beyond formal in-school management structures, other staff members should participate in curriculum leadership work, in line with their specific strengths and areas of expertise.

• Adequate resources are provided in support of optimal educational provision and active learning methods are used effectively in many classes. In this context, it is recommended that, following an audit of existing resources, future purchases are targeted and linked to curriculum development initiatives and to infrastructural developments. It is also recommended that a formal school policy be developed which facilitates the regular review of class allocations and teacher placements, in order to maximise internal school capacity and develop further a professional whole-school culture.

• Ancillary staff includes a secretary, a school cleaner and three special needs assistants (SNAs). All perform their duties to a satisfactory standard.

• Satisfactory compliance with legislation and with departmental regulations in respect of the length of the school year, enrolment and retention of pupils, health and safety and the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum is observed.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• School planning is effective and an on-going feature of school work. It is led by the principal and staff, and in some instances. Effective collaboration has occurred with other partners. Board minutes indicate regular review of school documents, practices and policies and that some reflection has taken place. All plans and policies are subject to change in line with evolving school needs.

• School planning is a useful guide for the staff in the formulation of specific teaching objectives. In this context, it is recommended that a more accessible format be devised for the recording of monthly progress records. This would facilitate an overview of teaching and learning in each subject area.

• All staff plan and prepare their work and keep monthly progress records. A variety of styles is evident and it is now recommended that a common template be devised and used to facilitate a whole-school approach to classroom planning.

• 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

- Many examples of good teaching were observed in the course of the evaluation and pupil achievement is, generally, satisfactory. This finding is in line with the views expressed by the board and the parents’ association. Questionnaire results were positive and almost all parents (96%) consider teaching to be good in the school. More use of ICT and group work would further motivate pupils to enjoy their lessons.

- Bhi dea-cleachtais le sonrú i bhfoghlaim agus i dt eagasc na Gaeilge i ranganna áirithe. Sroichteann cuid mhaithe de na daltaí caighdeán maith agus úsáideann alán de hoidí modhanna múinte spreagúla go minic. Cuítear béim inmholta ar úsáid na teanga agus ar an an dtréimhse iar-chumarsáideach i roinnt ranganna. Moltar cumas Gaeilge roinnt mhaithe de na hoidí sa scoil. Chun cur leis an obair a thúileadh, moltar don bhfoireann pleán forbartha don Ghaeilge a ullmhú ina leagfar amach spriocanna foghlaíma níos cinnte go háirithe maidir le héagsúlacht táéacs don léitheoireacht agus don saorscríbhneoireacht. Chomh maith leis sin, moltar ball nó baill forne le scileanna oiriúnach a aithint chun an obair seo a threorú agus a bhainistiú.

- Good practice was noted in the learning and teaching of Irish in some classes. A good number of the pupils achieve a good standard and many of the teachers frequently use stimulating teaching approaches. In some classes, the emphasis placed on the use of the language and on the post-communicative phase is praiseworthy. The teacher’s competence in Irish deserves praise in many cases in the school. To complement the work further, it is recommended that the teachers should prepare a development plan for Irish which would outline in more specific learning objectives particularly in relation to a variety of text types for reading and for creative writing. In addition to this, a member or members of staff should be identified to lead and manage this work.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. There is a suitable emphasis on reading as a key skill. Oral language is developed across the curriculum and the pupils’ writing skills and creativity are nurtured. Standardised tests indicate satisfactory levels of achievement. A range of supports is available for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Given the considerable resources available, six resource teachers and three SNAs, it is recommended that approaches to literacy become a key priority. More strategic, whole-school interventions should be devised and implemented to target groups within specific percentile bands and within specific timeframes.

- The quality of teaching and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Standardised test results indicate satisfactory standards in almost all cases. Good use is made of resources and classrooms are well equipped to facilitate active learning. Almost all parents (95%) believe their children are doing well at Mathematics and the majority of pupils (64%) think they are doing well at the subject. In order to develop existing good practice, it is recommended that more opportunities for group work are explored and that project work on the application of Mathematics to real life situations be further developed as additional strategies.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in SPHE is good. A structured programme is followed and a positive atmosphere towards it exists in the school. Lessons are meaningfully integrated and active learning methodologies are a regular feature. Almost all pupils (91%) say they feel safe in school and a similar percentage feel they can talk to a teacher if they are upset about something.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Pupils with special educational needs are supported by a team of six learning support/resource teachers, two of whom are shared with and based in neighbouring schools. Three SNAs are also employed by the school. The programmes are well managed and the work is suitably focused and relevant to the needs of individual pupils. However, the range of interventions is limited by the lack of space in some rooms.

- The importance of updating reports in order to ensure that external expertise is fully utilised in the development and implementation of interventions was emphasised during the evaluation.