Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Barnaderg Central National School
Barnaderg, Tuam, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 19275U

Date of inspection: 20 October 2011
1. Introduction

Barnaderg Central National School is a vertical co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. It was built in 1973 and was extensively renovated in 2008. It has an enrolment of 105 pupils. There are four mainstream teachers, one full-time learning support teacher and two part-time resource teachers. The school’s published mission statement aims to have a school environment which is positive and co-operative, and to enable each person to become independent and self-motivated. These aims are realised in the daily life of the school.

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 overall quality of teaching and learning is very good and pupils benefit from participation in a wide range of co-curricular activities that foster their academic, social and personal development.

- There is a clear and effective focus on literacy and numeracy skills development throughout the school.

- Effective provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.

- The teachers work diligently and collaboratively under the dynamic leadership of the principal.

- The school is managed in an efficient and strategic manner, and significant support is provided by the parent body.

- A cyclical approach is taken to school development planning and a process of self-review has been initiated.

The following main recommendations are made:

- In order to improve the effectiveness of progress records and to provide additional baseline data for self review, individual teacher planning should contain clearly stated learning outcomes under each of the strand units.

- The board should ensure that parents are not required to pay for aspects of the curriculum taught during the school day.

- Teachers in learning support and resource roles should be deployed in line with Special Education Circular Sp Ed 02/05.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and it works in a collaborative manner to provide an attractive, modern and well-maintained learning environment in the school. Regular meetings are held and an agreed report is provided. Priorities for development are identified and an action plan is followed along an agreed timeline. Communication between the board, the parents' association and staff is very effective.

- The in-school management team works in a collegial manner under the assiduous and thoughtful leadership of the principal. Each team member is enabled to adopt a leadership role and appropriate duties are assigned. An annual report is provided to the board on the work of the team.

- Pupils present as happy in their work and there is a strong emphasis on the promotion of positive discipline in an atmosphere of mutual respect throughout the school.

- Material resources are very well managed. The board has provided for a wide range of suitable equipment and resource materials to support teaching and learning across all areas of the curriculum. The smaller classrooms would benefit from some reorganisation to ensure adequate space for teacher demonstration and modelling of written work. Significant investment has been made in IT and it is anticipated that the school’s development plan for E-learning and for the further use of IT as a learning resource will be advanced this year.

- Ancillary staff make a very good contribution to the smooth running of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- School management and staff are commended for the cyclical and reflective nature of their school planning process. The school plan contains a range of administrative policies that are ratified and reviewed by the board on a regular basis. Comprehensive plans have also been adopted that guide practice in each curricular area.

- All teachers prepare long-term and short-term schemes of work. While short term planning is referenced closely to the strands of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), it is recommended that specific learning outcomes be identified for each of the strand units being taught. This would provide a further means of monitoring pupil progress. It would also contribute to the process of school self-review where some considerable progress has already been made through the analysis of pupil attainment in literacy and numeracy.

- 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 quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Pupils benefit from participation in a wide range of learning activities that foster their academic, social and personal development.

- Tugtar faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go héifeachtach a gus go dícheallach agus tá cumas labhartha na n-oidí ar chaighdeán maith. Baintear feidhm thairbheach as raon cluichí teanga, obair bheirte, amhránaíocht, dánta, agus róglacadh le linn na hoibre ó bhéal. Chun cur leis an dea-chleachtaí go agus chun inniúlacht cumarsáide na ndáltaí a theiseáil, moltar breis béime a chur ar na tréimhsí cumarsáide chun leanúnachas cainte na ndáltaí a chinntiú. Léann na daltái go cruinn, liofa agus cotháitear scileanna scríbhneoireachta go córasach tríd an scoil.

Irish is taught effectively and diligently and the teachers have a good standard of spoken language. Effective use is made of a range of language games, pair work, songs, poetry, and role-play during oral work. To build on this good practice and to strengthen pupils’ communication skills, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the communication stage of the lessons in order to ensure continuity of language. Pupils read fluently and accurately and writing skills are systematically developed.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good and effective use is made of ICT to enhance pupil’s language skills. Discrete oral language activities foster pupils’ confidence and competence. Teachers at some class levels are in the process of developing a collaborative approach to teaching comprehension skills and it is anticipated that this will shortly be adopted at whole-school level. Overall, pupils read fluently and they have access to a wide variety of stimulating reading material at each class level. Written work is regularly monitored and pupils’ work samples include a wide variety of writing genres. A good range of poetry is explored and there is a concerted effort to create a print-rich learning environment in all classrooms.

- Overall, the structure, pace and content of lessons in Mathematics is appropriate and the quality of pupil achievement is very good. Very good use is made of activity methods and concrete materials. Some aspects of the programme should be further differentiated, particularly for more able pupils.

- The school has access to both indoor and outdoor physical education (PE) facilities and the board is currently exploring how the acoustics in the PE hall might be improved. During the evaluation, effective use was made of a wide range of equipment and pupils enthusiastically demonstrated a range of appropriate skills. Ample opportunity was provided to explore through guided discovery. The gymnastics strand of the PE curriculum is taught by a visiting coach and parents are charged a fee. While teachers benefit from modelling of approaches during these lessons, the practice of charging parents for core elements of the curriculum during the school day should be discontinued. A record of learning outcomes should also be maintained in each of the strands.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school’s enrolment policy guarantees equality of access for all children. School activities are designed to promote inclusion and to celebrate individuality.

- The school has established an effective system of screening, identification and diagnostic testing to assist in the selection of pupils for additional support. Teachers in special education settings work collaboratively with mainstream class teachers to prepare programmes of work. Individual education plans are informed by the recommendations
from class teachers, psychologists and other relevant professionals. In general, learning targets are stated clearly and pupil progress is reviewed. A record of learning targets achieved by each pupil should be maintained.

- Teachers are commended for their efforts to expand the model of service to include in-class support, early intervention strategies, and team teaching. It is anticipated that the effectiveness of these newly adopted approaches will be reviewed as part of the school’s emergent self-review process.

- It is recommended that teachers in learning support and resource roles be deployed in line with Special Education Circular Sp Ed 02/05 so that, whenever possible, pupils with the greatest need are taught by teachers who have a degree of permanence of status that can guarantee continuity of provision.

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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 welcomes the very positive endorsement received in the recent WSE inspection.

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 confirms that all recommendations are currently being implemented.