Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Clonea Power NS
Carrick-on-Suir
County Waterford
Uimhir rolla: 19443P

Date of inspection: 21 October 2010
1. Introduction

Clonea Power NS is a six-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are 92 pupils currently enrolled and attendance levels in the school are very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

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 members keenly support the work of the school.
- The teachers are committed, hard working and motivated.
- The pupils are well behaved and courteous and engage very well in classroom activities.
- The staff engages in effective collaborative planning.
- The standard of teaching and learning in English and Mathematics is commended and very high standards are achieved by a good number of pupils.
- The quality of teaching in Science is of a very good standard and the school has had praiseworthy success in acquiring *Discover Primary Science* awards along with three green flags as part of the *Green Schools* project.
- Provision for pupils with special educational and additional learning needs is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management is advised to develop further its communication with the broader school community and to keep parents informed about matters relating to the operation and performance of the school.
- Regular formal meetings of the in-school management team should be convened to ensure that the team can respond collectively to ongoing issues. Their duties should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of the school.
- Parents should have greater involvement in the formulation and review of school plans and policies.
- The work of the parents’ association should be communicated more effectively to parents.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and it keenly supports the work of the school. It uses available resources to maintain the building and grounds and to equip the
school with suitable materials for teaching and learning. The board is advised to develop further its communication with the broader school community and to keep parents informed about matters relating to the operation and performance of the school. The enrolment policy should be reviewed to ensure that it complies with policy and obligations regarding the enrolment of pupils with special educational needs.

- The teaching principal oversees the day-to-day operation of the school with care and is ably supported in his role by the deputy principal and the special-duties post holder. The deputy principal served as acting principal for the majority of the last school year. During this period she successfully continued curricular and organisational development within the school with the full cooperation of the staff. It is now recommended that regular formal meetings of the in-school management team be convened to ensure that the team can respond collectively to ongoing issues. Their duties should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of the school.

- The quality of the physical environment of the school is good. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision in the school has improved significantly in recent months. A wide variety of teaching resources is made available to all teachers and purposeful learning environments are created in most classrooms. The school and its environs are very clean and neat.

- The pupils are well behaved and courteous and engage very well in classroom activities. The outcomes of pupil questionnaires show that almost all pupils feel safe in class and in the playground and that they get on well with the other pupils in their class.

- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. They receive feedback about the progress of their children during formal and informal parent-teacher meetings and in written reports. It is evident from the questionnaires that the majority of parents are happy with the work of the school. The parents’ association undertakes valuable fundraising. The work of the parents’ association should be communicated more effectively to parents, as was raised in the questionnaires completed by parents.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. A wide range of clear and effective curricular and organisational policies has been developed over the past year. A number of areas were prioritised and worked upon collaboratively by the members of staff. To build upon this practice, the school is advised to devise a long-term plan in order to spread the volume of priorities over a period of time. In this way, the pace of development and change can be managed more effectively. The views of parents should be sought in the review of plans and policies to allow parents to make a meaningful contribution to the school plan.

- The quality of classroom planning varies across the school. It is recommended that all teachers’ planning be based on specific learning objectives and make explicit provision for differentiation and the use of resources and methodologies, as was in evidence with some teachers. A majority of the teachers present monthly progress reports on a regular basis. This practice should be engaged in by all teachers on a continual basis.

Child protection policy and procedures

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

- Appropriate and effective teaching strategies and methodologies are employed by most teachers in the delivery of lessons. A majority of the teachers consistently take account of the range of pupil abilities, needs and interests and differentiate tasks appropriately. Material resources are used efficiently to support learning during instruction. Suitable assessment strategies are being implemented capably by most teachers. Use is made of standardised tests to confirm the progress of pupils in English and Mathematics. Some analysis is conducted on these by the learning support teacher. This practice should be extended and analysis used to inform mainstream classroom practice and the work of support teachers.

- The standard of teaching in Irish is very good. A broad range of strategies like games, stories, drama and actions are used to achieve learning targets. Worthwhile attention is given to reading and the pupil achieve a good standard in this element of work. Good use if made of real books and simple novels. In the middle classes, the pleasant and non-pressurised atmosphere during conversation classes is praised as is the pupils’ ability to ask and answer questions. There is appropriate emphasis on the use of verbs and on the construction of sentences. There is very good progression in the teaching of writing, especially in the middle classes and there is a high standard to be seen in some pupils’ work. Assessment in Irish should now be discussed and developed at a whole-school level.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by the pupils in English are very good. Oral language is well developed and discrete oral language lessons are taught by most teachers. The recent change of approach to the teaching of reading in infant and junior classes is highly commended. This includes the teaching of an extensive range of reading strategies and the use of a variety of parallel reading schemes with pupils reading at their own level, thus eliminating the need for a class reader. This approach should now be considered in middle and in senior classes. The current good practice in the use of novels and real books should also be extended. A developmental approach to writing is implemented on a whole-school basis. A review of the pupils’ written work confirms very good standards. Careful planning ensures that all writing genres receive adequate attention. The pupils recite a broad range of rhymes and poems. The quality of the pupils’ handwriting is very good across the school.

- Very good standards are achieved in the teaching and learning of Mathematics. A wide and balanced curriculum is taught to cater for the various class levels. There is support by way of the regular use of posters and concrete materials to explain
mathematical concepts to the pupils. Appropriate connections are made between Mathematics and the pupils’ environment to facilitate their understanding. Pupils participate actively in their learning and are encouraged commendably to express their mathematical knowledge orally. The pupils record their work neatly and clearly, and work in copybooks is monitored by the teachers regularly.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is very good. The teachers are praised for the active teaching methodologies and the emphasis placed on investigative learning and experiments. The school is commended for its participation in the Discover Primary Science initiative and the achievement of a number of awards of excellence. The pupils are also developing respect for and an understanding of the environment through their participation in the Green Schools initiative. The interesting displays of investigative work that enhance the programme in some classrooms should be further developed across the school.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Purposeful individual and group learning plans are prepared collaboratively and implemented proficiently. Support for pupils is provided primarily on a withdrawal basis, with some focused in-class support. It is advised that models of in-class support be explored and developed in line with the needs of the pupils. The interactions observed in the supplementary teaching setting were very affirming and encouraging of the pupils and commendable pupil progress is in evidence.

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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 is very satisfied with the content of the inspection report and is delighted that the Inspector has highlighted so many strengths of the work of the school. We are very grateful to the Inspector for her efficiency, professionalism and understanding. The Whole School Evaluation was a very positive experience for Board, staff, parents and children.

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 and staff of the school look forward to implementing the recommendations of the inspection and believe this work will enhance the operation and performance of the school.

The Board is committed to developing its communication with the broader school community and to keeping parents informed about matters relating to the work of the school.

Monthly formal meetings of the in-school management team have been convened to allow the team respond effectively to ongoing issues. Duties of the in-school management team are being reviewed as part of this process.

The Parents’ Association are very aware of the need for effective communication of their work to all parents and the school community. A Parents’ Association Newsletter will be sent to all parents on a regular basis. All parents are invited to monthly Parents’ Association meetings and are encouraged to attend. Parents look forward to having greater involvement in the formulation and review of school plans and policies.