An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Tola’s National School
Shannon
Co. Clare

Uimhir rolla: 19552U

Date of inspection: 12 February 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of St. Tola’s National School was undertaken in February 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Geography. 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

St. Tola’s National School is a thirteen-teacher, co-educational primary school, situated in Shannon town. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. The profile of pupils attending the school is diverse. Twenty nationalities are represented amongst the pupils and over seventy pupils speak a language other than English as their first language. Eighteen children of the Travelling community are currently enrolled in the school. At the time of the evaluation, one teacher was on leave and two mainstream class teachers were on probation.

The following table provides an overview of the enrolment and staffing in the school at the time of the evaluation:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils enrolled in the school</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream classes in the school</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers on the school staff</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream class teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers working in support roles</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs assistants</td>
<td>3</td>
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1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision

A strong Catholic ethos is in evidence. The school takes part in the celebration of Catholic Schools Week and in religious services and concerts. There is a high level of diversity in faith amongst the school population. The school is very inclusive of all of these faiths and very good efforts are made to promote a welcoming atmosphere in the school. The board of management, staff and principal are commended for their efforts in this regard.

1.2 Board of management

The board of management is properly constituted and meets on a regular basis. Minutes of these meetings are carefully noted and maintained. The board has availed of training provided by the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA). Board members demonstrate a high level of commitment to their respective roles.

The chairperson offers very good support to the school. She meets the principal regularly to discuss on-going issues and she meets with post-holders and teachers informally. She is committed to the continuous development of the school and is dedicated to the school’s inclusive ethos. The treasurer of the board of management presents a report to the board at every meeting and the school’s accounts are certified annually. The board ensures that the school premises are safe and it endeavours to maintain the school in an environmentally sustainable manner. It is
currently engaged in the process of auditing the school building to identify and address maintenance work which is in need of attention.

The board of management supports the work of the school in ensuring that very good standards are achieved in teaching and learning. It is highly supportive of the teachers’ commitment to raising standards in literacy and numeracy. It supports their continuous professional development in this area and ensures that an ample supply of high-quality resources is available to teachers and pupils. Whole-school trends in standardised tests are reviewed and discussed by the board as a means of monitoring standards achieved in literacy and numeracy. Recently, the board has focussed on the issue of improving pupil attendance and in particular, the consistently poor attendance of a minority of pupils. The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) returns are examined by the board on a quarterly basis. Careful records of pupils’ absences are maintained in individual pupil files. In accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000, it is advised that the board should formalise these practices in the form of an attendance strategy, in order to improve pupils’ overall level of attendance.

Organisational policies and curricular plans are discussed and ratified by the board and policies are reviewed on an ongoing basis. The board of management is currently involved in the review of the code of behaviour and the school’s health and safety statement with a view to ensuring that both are in line with relevant legislation and guidelines. All school policies are made available to parents on request. The publication and distribution of an annual report outlining developments in the school throughout the year is advised.

1.3 In-school management
The principal of the school was appointed at the start of this academic year. She has outlined a three-year plan which identifies the curricular and organisational targets to be addressed in the school. It is evident from the plan that the principal has a clear vision for her role and for the development of the school. She works in close collaboration with the board of management, the teachers and parents to realise this vision. She demonstrates commitment to ensuring that pupils benefit from high-quality teaching in a secure, supportive environment. As curricular leader, she offers exemplary guidance to teachers and in the short time since her appointment, her leadership has had a direct impact on teaching and learning, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy and support for pupils with special educational needs.

A deputy principal and three special-duties post holders work very diligently to support the principal and the school. They undertake a range of organisational, curricular and pastoral duties. These duties were reviewed and updated recently following consultation with the whole staff to ascertain the needs of the school. A strong partnership approach is evident in the manner in which the principal and in-school management team discuss and agree the aims of the school with the staff. It is advised that this process of continuous school evaluation be maintained and that regular review of the duties of the in-school management team is undertaken. This will help to ensure that the school’s development priorities remain to the forefront.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community
There is evidence of good communication amongst all stakeholders. Staff meetings are held once a term to discuss curricular and organisational issues. Individual members of staff collaborate frequently to discuss individual pupils’ progress.

An active parents’ association supports the work of the school and there is regular communication between the chairperson of the association and the principal. Association meetings are held regularly to discuss fundraising and the organisation of school events, including an annual table
quiz, the school’s sports, the celebration of the sacraments and the school’s healthy eating week. At the time of the evaluation, the association had a small number of members. Nonetheless, it is reported that many parents willingly support the work of the school. It is advised that the school should explore ways of harnessing this willingness by providing more opportunities for parents to become involved in the operation of the school through a broader range of activities. It is also advised that the work of the association should be highlighted on the school’s website.

Good efforts are made to communicate with parents. The parents of pupils who enrol in junior infants are invited to a plenary meeting with the principal, the board of management and the parents’ association, at which general school information and procedures are outlined. An annual parent-teacher meeting is convened to discuss pupils’ progress and further meetings can be arranged by appointment. A written report outlining pupil’s progress is issued to parents annually. Other forms of effective communication include the distribution of a weekly newsletter and use of the ‘text-a-parent’ facility.

1.5 Management of pupils
Over the course of the evaluation, pupils were very well behaved and they worked diligently throughout lessons. They were expressive and courteous in their engagements with the evaluation team. They co-operate well with their teachers and peers. Listening skills and turn-taking skills in class are very well developed. Classroom rules are displayed and implemented fairly and consistently and pupil-teacher relationships are respectful. Pupils’ good behaviour and achievements are celebrated at a weekly whole-school assembly and a ‘pupil of the week’ is selected at each class level. A review of the school’s code of behaviour will be carried out during this academic year by a committee comprised of some teachers, pupils and parents, a representative of the board of management, and a special needs assistant (SNA). Pupils and parents have been given opportunities to offer suggestions in relation to rewards, sanctions and school rules. This consultative approach is praiseworthy.

A small number of pupils have been diagnosed with emotional and behavioural difficulties and the school staff report that these pupils present with challenging behaviour. These pupils are carefully monitored, and the school liaises with external agencies and the pupils’ parents in an effort to improve their behaviour. Specific strategies are used to encourage good behaviour and to help to prevent and address incidents of misbehaviour.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning
The quality of whole-school planning is good and a range of organisational and curricular policies is available. All policies are reviewed periodically. Recently, the school commenced the worthwhile process of involving parents in the formulation of school policies, including the school’s code of behaviour and healthy eating policy. This is a positive development and it is advised that this practice should be continued. The school’s website, which is currently being developed, will serve as a useful tool for disseminating policies and general school information in the future.

The quality of curricular plans is generally good. The plans provide an outline of the content and skills to be taught and some of the plans refer to targets which will be developed throughout the school, over a period of time. Dates for the review of plans are also identified. Some of the school’s curricular plans are generic and lack relevance to the context of the school and the pupils. It is advised that these plans be reviewed systematically and that an emphasis be placed on documenting the very good developments which have taken place since these plans were
originally formulated. In the case of the school’s plans in English and Irish, this is particularly necessary, as it will help to ensure that current standards are maintained and that existing practices become embedded throughout the school. In some curricular areas, there is a need for further detail in relation to how some aspects of the curriculum will be taught. In Geography, a greater emphasis should be placed on outlining how fieldwork will be undertaken throughout the school. It is advised that the school’s plan in Mathematics should target real-life problem solving to a greater extent.

The quality of classroom planning is good. All teachers prepare long-term and short-term plans and the school’s agreed approach to short-term planning is consistently applied by teachers. Accordingly, high-quality learning experiences are provided which are reflective of the skills and content outlined in the Primary School Curriculum. Teachers prepare and use good resources effectively throughout lessons. Many of these resources are teacher-generated and are tailored to match the needs and ability levels of pupils. In some instances there is a need for teachers to document with greater clarity the manner in which lessons will be differentiated to cater for pupils with varying levels of ability and pupils with special educational needs.

All teachers prepare monthly progress reports (cuntas mhíosúla) which outline aspects of the curriculum which have been taught. Many teachers also include a reflective statement in these reports, outlining developments in their own professional practice as well as general observations of pupils’ progress. This is highly commendable. At some class levels there is an over-emphasis on documenting the text-book activities which have been completed by pupils during the month. It is advised that when compiling these reports, teachers should place greater emphasis on the content and skills of the curriculum which have been taught.

2.2 Child protection policy and procedures

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Science Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools (Department of Education and Science, September 2001). Confirmation was also provided 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.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 Language

Gaeilge

Tá caighdeán ard ag baint le teagasc na Gaeilge sa scoil seo. Léirítear dearadh dearfach i leith na teanga agus tugann na hoidí faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge go díograiseach. Tá cur chugnaíonna domhanda le húsáid na Gaeilge le linn na gceachtanna agus go neamhfhoirmiúil lasmhíugh den cheacht Gaeilge. De thoradh an dea-chleachtais, labhraíonn na daltaí go muiníneach na thopací éagsúla agus tá foclóirí ag léiriú go liom díobh.

Leagtar béim fhíontaigh ar chomhrá agus ar chumarsáid. Baintear úsáid cruthaitheach as réimse leathan de áiseanna oiriúnaigh i rith na gceachtanna chun suim na ndaltaí a mhuscaigh agus chun a gcuid foclóir a leathnú. Moltar na deiseanna labhartha a tugtar do na daltaí. Glacann siad páirt i rólanna difriúla, i gcuilich, i ndrámaíocht, agus in obair ghníomhach. Dírítear airí innmholta ar chruinneas foghraióchta sa chaint le linn na gníomháiochtaí seo. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí
3.1 Irish

The teaching of Irish is of a high standard in this school. A positive attitude towards the language is demonstrated and teachers approach the teaching of Irish diligently. There is consistency in teachers’ approach to the use of Irish during lessons and informally outside of the Irish lesson. As a result of this good practice, pupils speak with confidence about various topics and some of them have a broad vocabulary.

A worthwhile emphasis is placed on conversation and communication. Creative use is made of a range of suitable resources during lessons to stimulate pupils’ interest and to broaden their vocabulary. The opportunities given to pupils to speak are praiseworthy. They take part in various roles, in games, in dramas and in physical exercises. A praiseworthy emphasis is placed on accuracy of pronunciation throughout these activities. It is evident that pupils derive great enjoyment from these lessons. From the early years, the pupils recite a range of rhymes and poetry and they sing songs with energy and understanding. A table quiz and an Irish concert are organised on an annual basis and all pupils take part in these events.

There is a wealth of printed material on display in the classrooms, including flashcards, questions, posters and full sentences. Reading is effectively developed and many of the pupils in the senior classes read with fluency and understanding.

Writing skills are skilfully developed. Lessons are appropriately structured and pupils write a variety of texts including letters, poems and short stories. Their copies contain samples of functional and personal writing and a very good standard is noted in them. To further improve this standard, it is advised that additional opportunities be given to pupils to engage in creative writing.

3.2 English

The standard of teaching and learning in English is very good. Oral language is very well taught throughout the school and a worthwhile emphasis is placed on the development of pupils’ communicative skills. As a result, many pupils have a rich vocabulary and they communicate confidently and expressively. Discrete oral language lessons are taught and there is good linkage between these lessons and the teaching of reading and writing. Talk and discussion are the main contexts in use for oral language lessons. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their cognitive skills through language by engaging in whole-class and group discussions, brainstorming sessions and debates. It is advised that the very good practice observed could be further extended by using a broader range of contexts as a basis for lessons as outlined in the curriculum. Poetry is well explored and pupils enjoy reciting a good selection of rhymes and poems. They also work in groups to write their own poetry. Throughout these well-structured lessons discussion is facilitated and encouraged.
The teaching of reading is very good and accordingly, many pupils read fluently and demonstrate very good comprehension of texts. All classrooms feature a print-rich environment which includes creative displays of books, thematic interest centres, word walls and an abundance of labels and full sentences. Many classes contain well-stocked libraries and designated reading areas which are very attractively arranged. Phonological awareness is developed systematically and in the junior classes, early-reading skills are well taught. In middle and senior classes, reading skills are skilfully developed through the use of large-format books, a graded-reading scheme, novels and supplementary readers. Pupils also engage in paired reading and independent reading and they discuss books and authors with enthusiasm.

Early writing skills are well developed and at all class levels, pupils’ desire to write is fostered through free-writing sessions. The writing process is very well modelled by teachers and a variety of writing genres is explored. Written work is very carefully corrected by teachers and pupils’ progress is monitored and recorded using appropriate assessment strategies. Pupils engage in creative writing and in whole-class writing projects. Their work is displayed in the classroom environments and the quality of this work is of a very good standard. The standard of handwriting is good and it is evident that many pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

At some class levels, mainstream class teachers and support teachers engage in station teaching. For the purpose of these sessions, pupils are taught in groups in accordance with their ability as determined from the results of standardised tests and teachers’ observations. Teachers communicate frequently to plan these sessions which target specific, clearly-defined learning outcomes in oral language, reading and writing. The reduced pupil-teacher ratio is beneficial to pupils and teachers and generates very good opportunities to assess pupils’ progress in specific aspects of the curriculum. On an ongoing basis, teachers refine the content and approaches in use in accordance with the progress being made by pupils. The teachers are highly commended for adopting this approach to teaching and learning.

3.2 Mathematics
The quality of learning and teaching in Mathematics is very good throughout the school and excellent in many instances. Mathematics displays are a prominent feature in all classrooms and flash cards with the specific language required to explore particular topics are displayed, so that pupils can use the appropriate language accurately as an aid to understanding. All teachers use concrete learning resources very effectively to facilitate active and discovery learning and teachers use the interactive white boards adeptly to model and illustrate particular concepts. All teachers provide a balanced mathematics curriculum across each of the five strands and in many cases, thoughtful integration and linkage is a feature of planning. Pupils work independently and in pairs and support-teachers from the special-educational needs team are deployed in the mainstream classrooms during mathematics lessons to support pupils who are experiencing difficulties. However, there is scope for developing this model of in-class support in a more focused way to maximise the benefit of lower pupil-teacher ratios by providing more differentiated support for pupils.

On the evidence of classroom interactions, pupils are making very good progress in their learning. In the infant classes, pupils are able to classify and sort concrete materials and are developing good early number and mathematical skills. In the junior classes, pupils have a good understanding of place value and can apply their knowledge to solve problems. In the middle classes, pupils have good number sense. They can recognise the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes and can perform measurements accurately. In the senior classes, pupils demonstrate well developed estimation skills. In senior and middle classes, pupils perform oral and written number operations accurately. In some instances, there is scope for teachers to
employ more real-life contexts to allow pupils to use and apply Mathematics as a means of solving problems. Overall, there are many significant strengths in the provision for Mathematics in this school and the teachers are commended accordingly.

3.3 Geography
The quality of teaching and learning in Geography is consistently good throughout the school. Photographs, artefacts, maps, globes and interactive white boards are used very effectively to foster an interest in natural and human environments and to develop graphicacy skills. Approaches to teaching provide for the active exploration of concepts and aspects of the local environment. The teachers carefully introduce the geography-specific language relevant to a particular topic so that talk and discussion can be used effectively to explore ideas. In many instances, the topics selected are thoughtfully linked and integrated with other areas of pupil learning across the curriculum.

Pupils are making good progress in their learning. In the infant classes, good sequencing and active learning tasks are used to introduce pupils to the idea of human and natural environments. In the junior classes, very good use is made of resources and artefacts to study people and places around the world. Pupils in the middle classes have a well-developed sense of place and space and they have good ability to compare and contrast local, national and international places. In the senior classes, the pupils have developed good map-reading and graphicacy skills and they can discuss and reflect on their own research and project work with great competence and confidence. As a means of building on the many aspects of the good practice observed, the teachers should focus to a greater extent on providing pupils with more regular opportunities to engage in fieldwork. These opportunities should be used to enable the pupils to make use of specific geography skills such as conducting surveys, and questionnaires and interviews as a means of deepening their understanding of local environmental issues in Shannon and the surrounding areas.

3.4 Assessment
The school’s practice in assessing pupils is very effective. Class teachers administer tests regularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Results of tests are recorded and maintained by teachers and pupil profiles are developed in some curricular areas.

The Micra-T and Sigma-T tests are administered annually. Information regarding pupils’ results in these tests is communicated to parents in the form of STEN scores. The results of these tests are analysed as a means of selecting pupils for additional support. The Drumcondra Primary Reading and Drumcondra Primary Mathematics tests are also administered if a need for additional assessment is identified. Early screening is carried out at senior infant level through the use of the Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) and the Forward Together Programme is also used. The Aston Index is used as a screening test in second and third class and the diagnostic aspect of this test is used as a follow-up test if needed. The Neale Analysis, Quest, and the Burt Reading Test are among the diagnostic tests used to provide further information regarding pupils’ difficulties.

At the time of the evaluation, the school was engaged in a review of its assessment processes by researching other tests which may be of benefit to pupils and teachers.

4. Quality of Support for Pupils
4.1 Pupils with special educational needs
The provision for pupils with special educational needs and learning support needs is very good. The quality of teaching is consistent and is very good in the three support contexts evaluated. The
teachers use a wide range of methodologies to match the abilities, learning needs and the social and emotional needs of the pupils. The teachers manage pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and pupils with significant developmental delays very effectively.

Supplementary teaching is delivered to most pupils on a daily basis. Pupils receive supports in literacy and numeracy. Their oral language skills are developed and closely monitored. During lessons, the support teachers present new content and skills through a variety of learning activities and teachers emphasise consolidation and repetition. The pupils’ understanding is regularly monitored through skilful questioning. The teachers have developed good systems for communicating with mainstream class teachers, the principal and the parents. They use a wide range of resources appropriate to the needs, abilities and learning styles of the pupils and stimulating teaching environments have been created. Concrete, visual support and information and communication technology (ICT) materials are used, along with teacher-designed materials to support individual and group teaching.

A whole-school approach to the planning for pupils receiving additional supports has been introduced by the principal, in co-operation with the members of the special educational needs team, in the current school year. Effective individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning profiles (IPLPs) are drawn up for pupils who receive additional supports. Parents are involved in this process and they are provided with copies of the education plan for their children. This is very good practice. The individual plans and profiles are based on data from assessment reports, school-based reports and systematic consultation with class teacher, parents and, as appropriate, psychologists and other professionals working with the pupils. The individual plans outline information from diagnostic assessment as well as the results from standardised tests. Realistic, time-bound targets are recorded, monitored and assessed systematically. The support teachers have developed a whole-school approach to short-term planning and as a result there is a very coherent approach to implementing the learning targets for pupils with additional learning needs at all class levels from week to week. Comprehensive monthly progress records are maintained for each pupil or group who receive support teaching and these contribute to the review of the programmes for each pupil. At the end of each instructional term, the success of the programmes devised for pupils receiving additional supports is evaluated, following which, decisions are taken regarding each pupil’s needs for further support. The teachers use a range of appropriate diagnostic tests to evaluate pupils’ ongoing progress and to inform the learning targets devised for each instructional term.

4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups

Two teachers provide support to pupils from the Travelling community, one supports the pupils in the school on a full-time basis and the other provides support to pupils for five hours each week. Both of these teachers are based in nearby schools. A designated room and the school library are used as teaching spaces. Both spaces are suitably organised and the environments are supportive and attractive. Comprehensive plans are devised outlining a programme of work for pupils which addresses targets in literacy, numeracy and social development. These targets are appropriately based on pupils’ level of ability and stage of development. Pupils’ attendance and progress in relation to targets is monitored and recorded by teachers. Over the course of the evaluation, very good teaching and learning was observed in both settings during which clear learning outcomes were addressed. Lessons were well paced and pupils were affirmed regularly. A good range of methodologies and resources, including ICTs was used. It is evident that both teachers strive to foster very good relationships with pupils and all pupils co-operate willingly throughout learning activities. One of the support teachers for Travellers engages in station teaching as part of a team approach to supporting pupils in the mainstream class setting. The provision of support in this integrated manner is commendable as it represents an inclusive approach to responding to pupils’
needs. It is recommended, in line with the *Traveller Education Guidelines*, that the support teacher for Travellers should work as a member of the special educational needs team and that the pupils’ educational needs rather than identity should be the determining factor in providing support to pupils.

The support for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is good. The EAL policy identifies the school’s role in supporting EAL pupils and in developing intercultural understanding. The school environment is very inclusive. Flags of pupils’ home countries are prominently displayed in general purpose areas, alongside greetings in the pupils’ first language. Pupils are afforded opportunities to perform songs and poems in their first language at whole-school assemblies. Specific support for EAL pupils is provided by two teachers who are based in the school on a full-time basis. Appropriate assessments, based on the *Primary School Assessment Kit*, are used in order to determine pupils’ level of competence and to assess their progress over a period of time. In addition, very valuable collaboration takes place between the language support teachers and mainstream class teachers in assessing individual pupil’s language proficiency as well as the degree to which they socialise and communicate with their peers. While some in-class support is provided, pupils are for the most part withdrawn from the mainstream classrooms for support in groups and on a one-to-one basis. The learning environments are supportive and stimulating and feature thematic displays and some displays of pupils’ work. They participate well in activities and a good level of interaction is in evidence. Careful records of pupils’ progress are maintained.

Teachers plan their programmes of work carefully. They identify themes and activities to be developed in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In some cases, specific vocabulary is also identified. It is advised that this good practice be extended and that vocabulary and phrases should be identified in advance of all lessons and differentiated for pupils in accordance with their competency level. In order to further expand pupils’ skills in listening and speaking, it is advised that there is scope for teachers to plan for the use of a broader range of contexts for the development of these language skills. More emphasis should be placed on the simulation of real-life situations and use of play, games, total physical response activities, role-play, and real-life props. This approach will enable pupils to use language for the purpose of daily interaction to fulfil various social functions. It will also help to optimise the levels of interaction between pupils, their peers and their teachers and will develop their ability to sustain conversations using appropriate language and vocabulary.

5. **CONCLUSION**

The school has strengths in the following areas:

- The staff, principal and board of management are commended for their commitment to generating the positive, inclusive atmosphere which is strongly in evidence in the school.
- The principal and in-school management team are commended for their clear vision for the development of the school and for their strong leadership of the staff and pupils.
- Throughout the school, classroom environments are maintained in an exemplary manner. Very good efforts are made to celebrate pupils’ work through high-quality displays in classrooms and in the general school environment.
- There is a consistently high standard of teaching throughout the school. Teachers use a very good range of resources and methodologies and this ensures that lessons are interesting and engaging. The majority of pupils are highly motivated and diligent and they participate very well throughout lessons.
• The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high standard.

The following key recommendations are made in order to further improve the quality of education provided by the school:

• It is advised that the school further develop its strategies to address the poor attendance of a minority of pupils. In accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000, the school should formulate an attendance strategy in order to formalise its procedures in relation to pupil attendance.
• The further development of parents’ involvement in the operation of the school is recommended. It is advised that this may be achieved by initiating more consultation with parents and by involving parents in a broader range of activities.
• More extensive use of the real environment is advised in the teaching of Geography, by facilitating greater opportunities for field work in the local area.
• The model of in-class support which is currently being used should be further developed in order to maximise benefits to pupils and teachers.
• It is advised that when planning support for pupils with English as an additional language, greater attention should be paid to the development of pupils’ speaking and listening skills by allowing for increased pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher interaction in a variety of social contexts.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.

Published, September 2010
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 St. Tola’s N.S. welcomes the WSE report and its acknowledgement of the “consistently high standard of teaching and learning throughout the school.” The Board of Management would like to thank the inspectors for their professionalism and courtesy shown to all members of the school community during the course of 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.

- The In-School Management team are currently developing an attendance strategy to support the small minority of pupils and their families for whom attendance is an issue.
- St. Tola’s N.S. has a long tradition of parental involvement both formally through the Parent’s Association and informally with the general parent body. As plans and policies are developed and revised into the future, parents will continue to be consulted and encouraged to become involved in the planning process.
- A number of trails have been developed in the locality to facilitate greater opportunity for fieldwork and to enhance the learning on our local environment for the pupils.
- In-Class support has been trialled effectively in a number of classes. It is planned to develop, refine and extend this model of support across all classes in order to maximise the learning for the pupils.
- In working with pupils for whom English is an additional language all teachers are aware of the importance of allowing these pupils to experience language learning in a variety of contexts.