An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Drumcorrin N.S.
Drum, Co. Monaghan
Uimhir rolla: 19703P

Date of inspection: 9 June 2011
1. Introduction

Drumcorrin National School is a co-educational two-teacher primary school located in Drum, Co. Monaghan. The school which currently has 23 pupils is under the patronage of the Presbyterian church. Positive attendance patterns are in evidence for all pupils. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 works conscientiously to support the administration and development of the school.
- The principal manages and leads the school in an effective and affirming manner.
- The collegial working relationships and diligence of the staff contribute to the effectiveness of the school.
- Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning.
- A strong sense of community has been successfully cultivated.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English and Mathematics is very good.
- Comprehensive monthly progress reports and cyclical review of whole-school policies supports effective school self-evaluation and improvement.
- Pupils’ attainments are monitored closely in mainstream and special education settings.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The school enrolment policy should be reviewed to ensure statutory obligations in relation to pupils with special educational needs are observed.
- A parents’ association should be established to further enhance the consultative process between home and school.
- A range of in-class support models should be explored to extend the provision of supplementary support to pupils with special education needs in middle and senior classes.
- Appropriate short-term planning and individual pupil profile and learning programmes (IPLP) should be maintained for pupils with special needs.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management demonstrates great commitment to the development of the school and is commended for the good quality of their work. Members actively engage in regular policy formulation and review. The school enrolment policy should be reviewed to ensure that the statutory obligations in relation to pupils with special educational needs are observed in accordance with the Equal Status Act 2000. Finances are carefully managed. The board ensures that school facilities are maintained to a high standard.

- The diligent principal leads the school in a very effective and affirming manner. She is commended for her capacity to manage and lead the school through many phases of development in the course of her career. The principal successfully cultivates the support of staff, parents and members of the local community.

- The principal is ably supported by one special duties teacher who undertakes her duties in a very competent manner. High levels of collaboration between staff members contribute to the success of the school.

- The management of human and material resources within the school is very good. The motivated and hardworking staff engages in ongoing professional development which supports effective curricular implementation. The part-time secretary makes a significant contribution to the positive climate and smooth-running of the school.

- An extensive range of resources is employed appropriately to support teaching and learning in a variety of curricular areas. The school has recently invested in information and communications technology (ICT) and staff members are encouraged to extend its use as a learning medium for pupils. Pupils benefit from the purposeful use of the adjacent community hall. The school community is commended for the recent development of the outdoor play area for pupils.

- A caring and mutually respectful atmosphere is in evidence within the school. Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour and interact positively and confidently. Data from pupil questionnaires administered during the evaluation reflect positive pupil perspectives on a range of school related issues.

- A tangible school ethos of welcome underpins the positive working relationships between teachers and parents. However, it is recommended that a parents’ association be established to optimise parental involvement in policy development and other school activities. Data from the questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that almost all parents are very satisfied with the educational provision and organisation of the school. The school is a focal point within the local community and many valuable links have been established to sustain this strong spirit of community collegiality.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The overall quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is very good. A strategic three year plan has been developed which supports the cyclical review of administrative and curricular policies. Comprehensive curricular plans provide valuable guidance to
teachers within the multi-class situation. Teachers discuss priorities for development on a
regular basis to support school improvement initiatives.

- The quality of mainstream teachers’ planning is very good. Clearly delineated learning
objectives effectively plan for differentiated provision for pupils of varying needs within
these classes. The detailed monthly reports show the progressive development in pupils’
knowledge and skills across all strands of each curricular area. This laudable practice
contributes to the continuity in pupils’ learning and also supports school self-review.

- 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 teaching and learning in Irish is good. A positive attitude towards Irish is
evident throughout the school and pupils get great benefit and enjoyment from the well
structured and stimulating lessons. It is evident that pupils have a broad vocabulary and
most pupils succeed in structuring simple sentences independently. To further improve, it
is recommended that additional opportunities be provided for pupils to use a variety of
verbs regularly. Teachers develop pre-reading and reading skills in a competent manner
and the majority of pupils have attained a praiseworthy standard. Although some creative
writing is done it is now recommended that additional independent writing opportunities
be given to pupils.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral
language is developed purposefully in all classes and pupils demonstrate a confident
command of language. They read a broad range of carefully selected material and attain
good standards in reading commensurate with their abilities. Pupils engage in a wide
range of writing genres and the quality of their learning outcomes is praiseworthy.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good.
Carefully constructed opportunities are provided for pupils to explore mathematical
concepts and to apply them in a variety of meaningful contexts. Considerable emphasis
is placed on mental mathematical activities and pupils show proficient use of basic facts
and number relationships. Pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of
mathematical procedures. While their application of reasoning and problem solving skills
is praiseworthy, there is scope to enhance some pupils’ estimation skills.
The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is good. A broad and balanced curriculum is complemented by valuable co-curricular activities. Percussion instruments are used effectively to develop pupils’ sense of pulse and rhythm. They have received suitable opportunities to critically appreciate a wide range of music and are familiar with some forms of musical literacy. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils’ own creativity through individual and group composing activities.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers promote positive expectations about pupils’ learning and classroom dynamics are affirming. Carefully structured lessons facilitate child-centred learning for pupils of varying abilities. High levels of pupil engagement in whole class, group and individual learning activities were observed in all settings during the evaluation. Pupils’ learning is carefully monitored using an appropriate range of assessment strategies.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Almost all of the supplementary provision currently provided is through the early intervention model which is impacting positively on the development of pupils’ literacy skills in infant and junior classes. To build on this good work it is now advised that supplementary tuition should include the development of specific literacy and numeracy skills with pupils from middle and senior classes using a range of in-class support models. Lessons observed during the evaluation were well-structured and paced with the teacher making very effective use of a range of resources including ICT.

It is recommended that individual profile and learning programmes (IPLP) be provided for pupils with recognised special needs as a matter of priority in accordance with the school policy. Written daily records are kept retrospectively of work completed with pupils and this is shared with the mainstream teacher. However, appropriate short-term planning should be provided as advised in the Learning-Support Guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills (2000). Pupils’ progress is carefully monitored by the teacher who uses this data effectively to inform future teaching and consolidate pupils’ learning.

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