An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation REPORT

Ballyduff Central National School
Ballyduff, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 19805A

Date of inspection: 08 November 2010
1. **Introduction**
Ballyduff Central N.S. is a mainstream co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. The school participates in the School Support Programme (SSP) of *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS), the Department’s action plan for educational inclusion. It has a staffing of four mainstream class teachers, two full-time support teachers and a shared DEIS rural co-ordinator who works with three other schools in the area. Two other teachers provide support to pupils on a part-time basis. There are ninety-two pupils currently enrolled in the school. Pupil attendance is of a very good standard. 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 board of management provides good leadership to the school and fulfils its management functions effectively.
- Very positive working relationships have been developed in the school community between pupils, parents, staff and the board of management.
- The parents’ association plays a very supportive role in the school’s life and is actively involved in policy making.
- The principal provides strong and focused leadership to the school and he is highly committed to his work and to the ongoing development of the school.
- A committed and enthusiastic in-school management team discharges its duties in a highly professional manner.
- The teachers adopt a very professional approach to their work and it is evident that they are committed to the provision of high quality, learning and teaching in the school.
- There is evidence of very good assessment practices in the school.
- The school’s provision for pupils with special education needs is of a very high quality.
- The quality of the work done by the DEIS rural co-ordinator and the personnel engaged in the School Completion Programme is very high.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a discrete oral language programme, reflective of the objectives of the English curriculum, be introduced throughout the school.
- It is recommended that less focus be placed on class readers in English and in Irish and that increased emphasis be placed on providing pupils with a wide range of differentiated reading materials commensurate with their reading abilities.
• The placing of increased emphasis on problem-solving approach to Mathematics is recommended.

• It is recommended that the school’s relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy be amended to ensure that the RSE programme is delivered in the context of the overall SPHE curriculum, thus reflecting the best practice outlined in Circular 0022/2010.

• It is recommended that the school comply fully with Circulars 11/01, 24/02 and 32/03 in future deliberations regarding the retention of pupils in classes.

3. Quality of School Management

• The board of management provides good leadership to the school. The board is highly praised for its involvement in the discussion and ratification of whole-school organisational policies and curriculum plans and for its input into the formulation of the school’s DEIS plan. It is recommended that the board dedicate a section of its agenda to attending to the monitoring and evaluation of pupil outcomes, specifically in relation to the specific targets set out in the school’s DEIS plan.

• The in-school management team consists of the principal, the deputy principal and two special duties teachers. The principal provides very effective personal and instructional leadership to the school. He promotes a culture of teamwork and collaborative decision making. Each member of the in-school management team has a defined set of responsibilities which are very effectively fulfilled in a spirit of mutual support and of commitment to the school and its pupils.

• The school’s building and grounds are clean and maintained to a high standard. The board has provided the school with a wide range of resources to support teaching and learning. These are used very effectively.

• The management of relations and communication with the school community is of a very high standard. The school facilitates parents to play a very active part in supporting their children’s learning and clear and effective lines of communication have been established between the school, the board and the parents. The parents’ association is very supportive of the school and contributes greatly to the overall success of the school. An impressive range of home-school-community liaison initiatives which involve parents are organised very effectively by the DEIS rural co-ordinator. Responses to questionnaires issued to the parents of all pupils indicate very high satisfaction with the manner in which the school addresses the needs of the pupils and with arrangements made to communicate pupil progress to parents.

• It is evident that the pupils in Ballyduff Central N.S. are valued members of the school community and that they are treated with equality, fairness and respect. They are awarded ample opportunities to partake in a very wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils in the middle and senior classes, in their responses to questionnaires, indicate very high satisfaction with the school and the manner in which they are facilitated to engage in lessons and group work.

• Working in close collaboration with personnel from the Learning Initiative in North Kerry Initiative (LINK), the staff and the rural DEIS rural co-ordinator provide an extensive range of very effective supports for pupils and their parents. These supports greatly enhance the pupils’ educational experiences and impact positively on pupil attainment and attendance levels.
During the evaluation period it was noted that a significant number of pupils will spend nine years in the school. It is recommended that the school comply fully with Circulars 11/01, 24/02 and 32/03 in future deliberations regarding the retention of pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- It is evident that whole-school planning is viewed in this school as a continuous process which leads to school improvement. A good development plan has been drafted which provides a clear summary of areas for development and of the progress made in achieving previous development priorities.

- All teachers prepare comprehensive long and short term planning in preparation for their work. Future reviews of individual classroom planning might focus on how the curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs, specifically in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Monthly progress reports are completed by all teachers. It is recommended that these progress reports be utilised as a means of monitoring and self-evaluating the extent to which planning and teaching has achieved the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum.

- It is recommended that the school’s current relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy be reviewed to ensure that individual themes in RSE are not treated in isolation but rather in the context of the overall SPHE curriculum, thus reflecting the best practice outlined in Circular 0022/2010

- 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

- There are significant strengths in relation to the quality of learning and teaching in this school. Lessons are well structured, paced and delivered. A clear focus is placed on the consolidation and reinforcement of the content and concepts addressed in lessons. The quality of the presentation of pupils’ written work is of a very high standard and teachers are deserving of praise for the manner in which they monitor and evaluate this work. Responses to questionnaires, completed by parents and pupils, indicate very high satisfaction with the quality of teaching in the school.

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go hábalta sa scoil seo agus cloîtair leis an nGaeilge mar theanga theagaisc le linn na gceachtanna. Bainleadh úsáid fhónta as cluichí, drámaíocht, raíonn, amhráin agus as acmhainní oiriúnacha chun cumas cainte na ndaltaí sa teanga labhartha a fhorsairt sna ranganna uile. Éiríonn go creidteach leis na daltaí sa litéroteireacht. Léann siad go cruinn agus léirionn siad a dtuisceart ar an ábhar litéroteireachta trí cheisteanna a fhreagraítear ó bhéil. Tá ceangal maith idir an obair ó bhéil, an litéroteireacht agus an obair scríofa. Tá neart samplaí d’obair scríofa na ndaltaí ar fáil ina gcóipleabhair, agus bainleadh ard-cháithdheán le cuideachtaí a bhaint as na daltaí. Moltar beáim níos treise a chur ar ‘éisteacht’ mar shnáith den churachaí sna ranganna go léir agus cleachtaí
éisteachta agus gníomhiochtaí scéalaíochta a chur os comhair na ndaltaí ar bhonn rialta.

Irish is ably taught in this school and is used as the language of instruction throughout the Irish lessons. Good use is made of games, drama, rhymes, songs and suitable resources to develop the oral language of the pupils in the classrooms. Children are making good progress in reading. They read accurately and they display their understanding of reading through answering questions. There is good integration across oral, reading and written work. Many samples of pupils’ written work were evident in their copybooks and a very good standard is reached in the majority of this work. It is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on the ‘listening” strand of the curriculum and that listening activities including story reading should be increased in all classes.

• The quality of teaching and learning in English is of a very good standard. Very good efforts are made by individual teachers to develop the oral language skills of the pupils. It is recommended that the school review the current provision in this area and that a discrete oral language programme be introduced that is explicitly linked to the oral language objectives as set out in the English curriculum. As a result of targeted literacy interventions the pupils are making discernible progress in English reading. To support this good work it is recommended that less focus be placed on class readers and that increased emphasis be placed on providing pupils with a wide range of differentiated reading materials commensurate with their reading abilities. It is further recommended that each English reading lesson focus on the promotion of an identified reading strategy. Pupils are facilitated to write in a wide range of genres and for a variety of audiences. The quality of this work is of a very high standard.

• Significant progress has been made in raising the numeracy standards of the pupils in the school. Standardised test results indicate that the majority of pupils are attaining very well in Mathematics. The school is highly praised for the introduction of initiatives which focus on improving pupil learning outcomes. The placing of increased emphasis on problem-solving approach to Mathematics is recommended.

• Overall pupil attainment in Geography is of a good to very good standard. The pupils are facilitated to experience a broad and balanced geography curriculum and teachers were observed to employ a wide range of teaching approaches and methodologies in lessons. Pupils regularly engage in project work and very appropriate field trips are organised for pupils throughout the year. This good practice is highly praised. It is recommended that the exploration of natural and human environments be firmly based in the local environment of the pupils thereby enhancing their understanding of local, regional and wider environments and their interrelationships.

• There is evidence of very good assessment practices in this school. Teachers employ a broad range of assessment modes. In questionnaires issued, a significant majority of pupils indicate that teachers tell them how to improve their work and they feel that they are making very good progress in reading and Mathematics. In some instances pupils are encouraged to self-evaluate and to set individual targets for improvement. This good practice is deserving of praise. Assessment data in the area of literacy and numeracy is very effectively utilised. Support teachers utilise a very wide range of diagnostic tests to monitor pupils’ progress and to identify pupils’ learning needs. Very good end of year progress records are communicated to parents. Two parent-teacher meetings are organised annually. It is now recommended that a system whereby pupil progress is assessed and recorded in each of the curriculum areas, be devised and implemented.
6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is of a very high standard and pupils within these settings are making very good progress in their learning. Very comprehensive individual education plans are formulated for individual pupils in collaboration with parents. Lessons for pupils with special educational needs are well structured and tailored to the pupils’ individual needs. A range of early intervention initiatives is being successfully implemented. Parents’ responses to questionnaires, completed during the evaluation, indicated very high satisfaction with the fact that pupils get help from their teachers when needed and that the school is helping pupils to progress with reading and mathematics. It is recommended that the current focus on raising the attainment of pupils in the area of numeracy be more carefully balanced with the need to address literacy levels.

- Careful and thoughtful provision is made for pupils who may suffer from educational disadvantage. The board of management ensures that all activities, whether during school hours or after school, are equally available to any pupil who wishes to participate.

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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

On behalf of the whole school community, the board of management of Ballyduff Central National School would like to thank the inspection team for their professionalism, the very positive report on our school and for making the evaluation a most worthwhile experience.

We are delighted that the enthusiasm, commitment, dedication and hard work of the pupils, parents, staff, teachers, in school management team, Principal and Board of Management have been affirmed.

We welcome the acknowledgement of the very professional approach of teachers and the high quality of learning and teaching in our school. The inspectors’ strong endorsement of the range of supports, practices and programmes we have in place to enhance the education of all pupils through L.S.R.T., D.E.I.S. and L.I.N.K. is significant.

We particularly welcome the recognition of the very positive working relationships in our school community, our interested, committed and supportive parents and the active involvement of our Parents Association.

The board congratulates the staff, parents and pupils.

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 in consultation with the Principal and staff are facilitating the recommendations and have endeavoured to and will continue to implement these as soon as possible.

A differentiated English Reading programme has started with our current Junior Infants and Senior Infants.

An English oral language programme is been compiled using First Steps, Aistear and the Primary School Curriculum.

Our R.S.E. policy has been revised and updated on our School Development Planning Day on May 27th.