Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil San Carlo
Leixlip, Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla: 19875V

Date of inspection: 24 November 2011
1. **Introduction**
San Carlo Senior School is located in Confey, Leixlip, County Kildare. It caters for boys and girls from third to sixth class and is under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. The school’s motto *Samhlaíocht, Saothar agus Cúram* is exemplified in the sense of common purpose among the school community. There are 254 pupils enrolled and attendance rates are very high. The board of management 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 and parents’ association are well informed and are highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The teachers demonstrate commitment to the school and to their work and are commended for the way in which they collaborate in the best interests of pupils.
- The school is praised for the quality of displays and for the provision of stimulating learning environments.
- The staff has embraced the process of school self-evaluation and has devised a three-year school improvement strategy.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The correct deployment of additional teaching resources to learning-support and resource duties should be implemented as a matter of priority.
- Existing good practice in teaching and learning should be recorded in whole-school curricular policies with a view to consolidating this practice and extending it to all classrooms.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is properly constituted, meets regularly and works diligently in the best interests of the school. The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. Finances are carefully managed. The board plays an active role in the development of organisational policies.

- The acting-principal commenced in this role in September 2011. Since that time he has evaluated the needs of the school and has begun to implement actions that will continue to improve provision. He is ably supported by the in-school management team who undertake a wide range of responsibilities conscientiously and competently. Assigned duties are reviewed regularly and reflect the on-going priorities of the school.

- The school is very well resourced and all classrooms and corridors provide bright, clean and stimulating learning environments. Provision for information and communication
technology (ICT) is commendable. Nine mainstream and four support teachers have been allocated to the school by the Department. One of the support teachers has been deployed to mainstream teaching. The board is advised that additional teaching resources provided under the general allocation model cannot be used for mainstream class teaching as stated in Department Circular 02/2005.

- Positive relationships have been cultivated between the board, the staff and the parent community. Parent representatives agreed that they are kept well informed about school activities and questionnaire responses indicate that almost all parents are happy with the school. The parents’ association makes a significant contribution to the school’s development in a variety of ways and is involved in a wide range of school activities.

- Pupils are well managed and are treated with care and respect. They are enthusiastic and motivated in their learning. They demonstrate positive levels of confidence and self-esteem. In some instances pupils’ listening skills should continue to be developed and cultivated. Questionnaire responses indicate that the majority of pupils like coming to school. While pupils are involved in the Green Schools initiative, further opportunities for their involvement in decision-making should be explored.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Organisational and administrative policies are of a good standard and meet legislative requirements. Plans have been devised for all aspects of the curriculum and the quality of these plans is good. In the school’s on-going review of its curricular plans it is recommended that they be further contextualised to the circumstances of the school recording existing good practice in teaching and learning. Procedures for the implementation of whole-school policies should be agreed and the review process should include systematic monitoring of the impact of the plans. There is evidence of positive engagement with the process of school self-evaluation. The school has used the Looking at our School document as a framework for self-evaluation and has developed a three-year school improvement strategy.

- Good quality long-term plans have been developed for each class at a whole school level. They outline incremental plans of work and provide for continuity and progression. Nevertheless, there is scope to further contextualise these plans and to adapt them to the needs, interests and abilities of pupils in individual classes each year. All teachers provide good-quality short-term planning based on curriculum structures. In some instances, further use of curriculum objectives, particularly in English and Irish, is recommended. The school is commended for its collaborative approach to planning and for sharing plans in the best interests of pupils.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Excellent practice was observed in some settings which was characterised by effective preparation for lessons, the promotion of good listening and turn-taking skills, appropriate pacing and the use of a wide variety of methodologies and strategies. Active pupil participation and the provision of activities to meet individual pupils’ needs were also evident in these settings. Consideration should be given to determining how this very effective practice could be
shared within the school. Additional differentiation in English and Mathematics is provided through in-class support in most classrooms. Pupils can discuss their learning with confidence. Resources, including ICT, are used well to support teaching and learning. Classroom relationships are pleasant and respectful. Most pupils agreed that they find their lessons interesting and almost all agreed that teachers explain things clearly to them.

- All teachers maintain assessment folders. Standardised tests are administered in English, Irish and Mathematics. The results of these tests have been analysed and individual pupil progress is tracked. It is recommended that assessment be extended in other curriculum areas and that the good practice observed in many classrooms be included in the school policy on assessment.

- Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Leagtar béim chóir ar an nGaeilge mar theanga theagaisc agus baintear úsáid éifeachtach as rabhlóga, tomhais, seanfhocail, scéalaíocht, dánta agus amhráin chun chruthú cumarsáide na ndaltaí. I gcuid de na ranganna b’fhiú breis deiseanna cumarsáide a-cruthú chun an teanga a cheachtadh a thuiileadh i gcomhthéacsanna cumarsáideacha, ionas go mbeidh in ann an Ghaeilge atá foghlamtha acu a úsáid agus a shealbhú a thuiileadh. Forbraítear scileanna léitheoireachta go céiminíil. Sroichteair caighdeán maith sa scribhneoireacht agus sonraíodh roint dea-oibre sna cóipleabhair.

The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Correct emphasis is placed on Irish as the language of instruction and effective use is made of tongue-twisters, riddles, old sayings, storytelling, poems and songs to help the pupils’ communicative abilities. In some classes, the creation of additional opportunities for communication is advised so that pupils will be able to use and further consolidate the Irish they have learned. Reading skills are developed incrementally. A good standard is achieved in writing and some good work was observed in the copybooks.

- Effective practice was observed in teaching and learning in English. A variety of strategies is used to promote a culture of reading throughout the school. Differentiated reading programmes are provided through the use of parallel readers. The integration of the reading programmes with other curricular areas reinforces the learning process. Both the functional and creative aspects of writing are developed appropriately. Opportunities are provided to write in a variety of genres and written work is regularly monitored and displayed. A more consistent implementation of the school’s policy on handwriting is recommended. Emotional and imaginative aspects of the curriculum are being developed through the use of poetry. Questioning is used well and language is modelled precisely. However, there is scope for the broader implementation of a curriculum-based oral language programme.

- There is a high standard of teaching and learning in Mathematics. Oral discussion, games and experimentation with concrete materials are used to develop pupils’ grasp of concepts. Illustrative materials are used to support the acquired understanding. There is a consistent approach to the use of mathematical language across the school. Pupils demonstrate competence in problem-solving and estimation skills.

- The teaching, learning and pupils’ achievement in History is of a high quality. Appropriate timelines are displayed in most classrooms. Aspects of the History programme are integrated effectively with other curricular areas, particularly English and Visual Arts. Primary sources including photographs and oral evidence are used. While an appropriate focus is placed on local history, pupils’ knowledge of this aspect of the programme should be consolidated on an on-going basis.
6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- Very good practice was observed in the provision of support for pupils with additional learning needs and the staged approach is implemented effectively across the school. Detailed individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) are prepared containing clear learning targets. Programmes of work are determined by pupil needs and are informed by regular assessment. Progress records are maintained systematically. There is evidence of good collaboration and of regular reviews of practice and progress. Lessons are well structured and well resourced and there is a good balance between withdrawal and in-class support. In order to make optimum use of its resources the school is advised to continue to refine its approach to in-class support to ensure the efficient use of time.
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 wishes to thank the Inspectorate for producing a fair report which reaffirms the good practice and high standard of teaching and learning in Scoil San Carlo.

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 has planned that the correct deployment of additional teaching resources to learning support and resource duties will be implemented as a matter of priority.