Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Maulatrahane National School
Leap, Skibbereen, County Cork
Uimhir rolla: 19978l

Date of inspection: 25 May 2011
1. Introduction

Maulatrahane Central National School is a co-educational rural school situated approximately three miles outside Skibbereen, County Cork. This school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross and has a current enrolment of 45 pupils. 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 manages resources effectively and supports the work the school.
- Teaching staff is committed to promoting pupils’ well being and achievement.
- Overall the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good.
- Pupils are well behaved, courteous and enthusiastic about their learning.
- Parents fundraise for resources and actively support extra-curricular activities.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board of management should comply with departmental guidelines in relation to the frequency of formal board meetings. Accounts should be independently certified regularly.
- The in-school management team’s duties should be reviewed in accordance with the terms of circular 17/00 with particular emphasis on the development of the curricular leadership role.
- Structures should be established to ensure all stakeholders participate in reviewing the school plan. A greater link should be established between classroom planning and whole-school planning.
- Moltar forbairt bhreise a dhéanamh ar chur chuige cumarsáide i múineadh na Gaeilge. (It is recommended that a communicative approach to the teaching of Irish be further developed.)

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management has carried out regular maintenance works to ensure the school building and environs are maintained to a high standard. The chairperson regularly liaises with the principal. The board meets once a term culminating in three meetings annually. It is recommended that the board complies with Department of Education and Skills’ guidelines in relation to the minimum annual number of board
meetings. Minutes of meetings and financial accounts are carefully maintained. It is recommended, however, that accounts be certified independently in line with section 18 of the Education Act 1998. Maintenance issues are frequent items on agendas. Board of management minutes indicate that pupil achievement is not a feature of meetings. Teaching and learning, including a review of overall progress in pupil achievement, should form a regular feature on the agenda for board meetings.

- The principal leads the school’s planning process and actively encourages staff to participate in continuous professional development (CPD). It is recommended that his instructional leadership role be further developed, particularly in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum. The in-school management team ably supports the principal. While duties are assigned to post holders, it is recommended that these be reviewed to reflect responsibilities as outlined in circular 17/00, Appointments to Posts of Responsibility. Developing the role of the in-school management team in curricular leadership would also greatly enhance the monitoring and implementation of the curriculum on a whole-school basis.

- Resources are effectively managed. The board has invested in a wide range of resources, which are appropriately employed to support pupils’ learning. Interactive white boards are judiciously used as teaching and learning tools. The contribution of a part-time secretary to the operation of the school is commendable.

- The staff is committed to promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. They are courteous, co-operate willingly and contribute positively to the quality of school life. The school has a ratified code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy which are implemented consistently throughout the school. Pupils indicated through Department questionnaires that they enjoy their learning and that lessons are interesting.

- The school has an active parents’ association. The association is mainly involved in fundraising and in organising extra-curricular activities. The chairperson meets regularly with the principal to discuss the aforementioned activities. In response to department questionnaires respondents agreed that the school is well run. Many parents, however, stated that their opinions are not sought in relation to school policies. It is recommended that the parents’ association be encouraged to consider affiliation to the National Parents’ Council (primary) and that structures be developed to ensure communication with all parents.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A whole-school plan has been formulated by the teaching staff. A broad range of curricular and administrative plans have been ratified by the board. Although some are signed and dated on ratification, it is advised that all plans be signed and dated. Structures should now be put in place to enable all stakeholders input into the revision of policies. The enrolment policy should also be reviewed to ensure it complies with equality legislation.

- All teachers provide long-term and short-term planning documents. In general, the quality of long-term plans is poor. It is recommended that these long-term plans be linked to the whole-school plan with a clear delineation of learning outcomes. While pupil learning outcomes are monitored in practice through testing and teacher observation, consideration should also be given to the recording of learning objectives to be achieved and the differentiation strategies to be implemented in short-term plans. Monthly progress records are regularly maintained. Recording of objectives achieved and skills developed by pupils, on a whole-school basis, would greatly augment current practice.
• Limited school self-evaluation processes are evident. It is recommended that formal structures be established, led by the in-school management team, to ensure ongoing self-evaluation by all stakeholders.

• 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

• Overall the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Textbook-based learning and whole-class teaching are the predominant approaches employed in some classes. It is recommended that the good practice observed in some classrooms in relation to active learning methodologies, use of computers, groups work, structure and pace of lessons be further extended and developed on a whole-school basis.

• Baintear leas fónta as rannta, dánta agus amhráin chun cumas éisteachta agus cumas labhartha na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Cé go bhfuil foclóir leathan ag daltaí, moltar, áfach, an cur chuige cumarsáide a fhorbairt chun a scileanna labhartha a theagmháil. Léann daltaí go liofa i gcoitinne, ach b’fhíú go mór bheiri sa bhreis a chur ar fhorbairt na tuisceana le linn na ceachtanna léitheoireachta. Moltar réime níos leithne túiscanna léitheoireachta, úrscéalta Gaeilge san áireamh, a chur ar fáil do na daltaí. Cé go ndéantar roinnt scribhneoireacht cruthaitheach, moltar anois deiseanna scribhneoireachta cruthaitheach a thabhairt do dhaltaí ar bhonn rialta.

*Constructive use is made of rhymes, poems and songs in promoting speaking and listening skills in Irish. Although pupils have mastered a wide vocabulary, it is recommended that a communicative approach be developed to enhance conversational skills. Pupils generally read with fluency. However, it would be beneficial if greater emphasis is placed on developing pupils’ understanding. It is also recommended that a wider range of reading materials, including Irish novels, be used. Although some creative writing exercises are engaged in, it is now recommended that these opportunities be promoted on a more regular basis.*

• The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Pupils have a broad vocabulary and express themselves confidently on a wide variety of topics. Poetry and traditional nursery rhymes are central features of oral language lessons. Pupils read class readers, library books, novels and teacher generated texts with confidence and understanding. A commercial phonics scheme is creatively implemented. The writing process is engaged in productively and pupils write appropriately in a variety of genres.

• A commendable emphasis is placed on mental Mathematics and pupils display a high standard of achievement. A variety of concrete materials is effectively used to introduce and to consolidate concepts in all classes. These are suitably linked to pupils’ own environments and previous knowledge. Number facts are well memorised. Calculators are appropriately used and the teaching of mathematical language is a central feature of lessons.
• Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is implemented as part of the school’s culture. Opportunities are provided to develop pupils’ skills and talents through a variety of extra-curricular activities. Pupils’ work is celebrated by attractive displays throughout the school. Discrete lessons use a variety of programmes appropriately, including Stay Safe, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Walk Tall. A broad and balanced curriculum in this area is implemented giving pupils opportunities to engage in discussion on a broad range of topics including bullying, safety issues and developing friendships.

• A variety of assessment tools is used appropriately throughout the school. Standardised tests are administered annually and results are centrally stored. It is now advised that a deeper analysis of results be undertaken to guide assessment for learning and to assist in the implementation of a differentiated programme which would cater for varying pupil abilities. A wide range of diagnostic tests are suitably administered.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Three teachers, two of whom are based in other schools, provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs in both literacy and numeracy. It is recommended that the board of management gives consideration to the rationalisation of this service within the school to ensure more effective deployment of personnel. Support is provided mainly on a withdrawal basis, either individually or in small groups. It is recommended that a greater balance be achieved between withdrawal of pupils and in-class support.

• Support teachers work effectively in collaboration with mainstream class teachers, parents and external professionals in compiling and reviewing appropriate individual education plans (IEPs). Some early intervention strategies are suitably employed in junior classes. These strategies could now be further developed. One support teacher takes responsibility for the teaching of literacy to third class on a daily basis. It is advised that this practice be reviewed to ensure compliance with circular 02/05 Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools

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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

Reference to Long term plans – P. 2 – Section 4.
The Board of Management of Maulaträhane N.S. refutes the statement that "long term plans are poor". The class teachers have eighty five-years cumulative teaching experience in multi-class situations and as far as the board is concerned their planning and their delivery of the curriculum is above reproach.