Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Galway Educate Together National School
Newcastle, Galway
Uimhir rolla: 20000L

Date of inspection: 9 March 2012
1. Introduction

Galway Educate Together National School is a multi-denominational, co-educational primary school situated in Galway City. The school is under the patronage of Educate Together. There are eight mainstream class teachers, eight learning support/resource teachers and ten special needs assistants (SNAs) in the school. There are 228 pupils enrolled at present. School enrolment is rising and the school is due to be extended in the near future. Pupils’ attendance patterns vary and in general are very good.

This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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

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<th>The following are the <strong>main strengths</strong> of the work of the school:</th>
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<td>• The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school.</td>
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<td>• The principal and deputy principal provide very effective leadership.</td>
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<td>• Teachers approach their work in a dedicated and professional manner.</td>
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<td>• Teachers use a range of teaching methods and approaches.</td>
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<td>• Good to very good lessons were observed at each class level.</td>
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<td>• The quality of the teaching and learning of English is very good.</td>
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<td>• Good standards are achieved in Mathematics, with some very good practice observed.</td>
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<td>• Pupils’ behaviour and their engagement in the learning process are excellent.</td>
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<td>• The quality of support for pupils is excellent. The emphasis on inclusion and integration is highly commendable.</td>
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The following **main recommendations** are made:

| • Overall, teaching and learning in Irish should receive further attention. |
| • Team teaching should be further developed and the role and structure of in-class support should be reviewed. |
| • Further attention should be given to improving the presentation of pupils’ written work. |
| • Classroom libraries need to be upgraded. |
3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is of very good quality. The board of management is properly constituted and meets regularly. Board members have been assigned a range of specific roles. The school's accounts are well maintained and are certified annually. The board's priorities include the proposed extension, improving literacy and numeracy, and continuing to develop a sense of community among the education partners.

- The principal and deputy principal display very effective leadership skills. They take a highly professional, committed and personal approach to ensuring the quality of provision in the school. They place commendable emphasis on building and maintaining relationships with the school community. Very good emphasis is placed on instructional leadership.

- The members of the in-school management team work well together and fulfil their additional responsibilities effectively. They are innovative, reflective and progressive. It is recommended that post-holders make an annual report to the board of management on their work.

- School personnel are deployed appropriately overall. The work of the school secretary, the SNAs, and the other ancillary staff, makes a commendable contribution to the smooth running of the school.

- The parents' association meets regularly. While there is regular communication between the parents' association and the principal, it is recommended that this relationship be further developed. Communication is maintained with the wider parent body through emails, texts and in the school newsletter. Parents are involved in a range of activities, including fund-raising, the school fair, sports day and teacher-appreciation day. Parents have been involved in policy review and development. The results of parents' questionnaires indicate that parents feel that the school is well run, that a safe environment is provided for their children and that the school deals fairly with complaints. Parents report that, in general, they are very satisfied with the education provision in the school and they receive good information about their children’s learning at the annual parent-teacher meeting.

- The quality of pupil management is excellent. Pupils are very well-behaved and very engaged in their learning. The students’ council is a very commendable initiative. The school’s approach to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is outstanding. Pupils’ questionnaires indicate that they feel this is a good school, that their teachers explain things clearly and that they can talk to a teacher if they are upset about something. Almost all pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The whole-school planning process is good. Considerable work has been achieved in devising the whole-school policies and plans. It is very commendable that policies are available on the school website. Pupils’ progress in English and Mathematics, as measured in standardised tests, is recorded at each class level. Individual pupils’ results are analysed and whole-school trends are identified. Action is taken based on this information.
The quality of school self-evaluation is very good. The school engaged in a rigorous self-evaluation process in 2010. The school reflects on the success of educational interventions and programmes regularly.

The quality of classroom planning is good overall, with very good practice evident in many settings. Each teacher regularly prepares long-term and short-term plans and maintains a monthly record of the work covered. Some teachers include commendable reflective comments in their planning. Assessment informs teaching and learning. A range of assessment modes is in place at each class level. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their own work. Strategies are provided to enable them to reflect on their learning. There is some excellent sharing of plans with parents using the school’s website. The overall transparency and accountability in teachers’ classroom planning and work is very praiseworthy.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning ranges from good to very good. Where good, well-structured lessons were observed, the teachers had clear learning objectives and shared these with pupils. A good range of teaching approaches and strategies was employed, including pair work, group work, talk and discussion and the use of concrete materials.

Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlaíthe sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán, cé go moltar don scoil a bheith ag dréim le caighdeán níos airde as seo amach. Cothaítear dearadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus baintear úsáid as réimse leathan modhanna muinte. I gcuid mhór de na ranganna, leagtar béim ar chúlchíte teanga, obair i bpéirí, agus drámaíocht. Tá rannpháirtíocht na ndaltaí in obair ó bheáil go maith sa chuid is mó de na ranganna agus sroicheann cuid mhaith diobh caighdeán mhaith sa Ghaeilge labhartha. Tá go leor de na ndaltaí, áfaich, teoranta sa chaint agus moltar an obair seo a fhóchaíte níos mó. Tá caighdeán léitheoireachta na ndaltaí measartha ar an iomlán. Ba gha i bhfad níos mó béime a chur ar mhúineadh na létitheoireachta chun an caighdeán a ardu. Sa scribhneoireacht, moltar an obair a dhéantar sa scribhneoireacht chruthaitheach a leathanú.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good overall, although it is recommended that the school strive for higher standards in the future. A positive attitude is fostered towards Irish and a wide range of teaching methods is used. In many classes, emphasis is placed on language games, pair work, and drama. Pupils’ participation in oral language work in most classrooms is good and many of these attain a good standard in spoken Irish. Many pupils’ oral language ability is limited, however, and it is recommended that this work be further developed. Pupils’ standards in Irish reading are fair overall. There is a need to place far more emphasis on the teaching of reading to raise standards. In writing, it is recommended that the work done on creative writing be expanded.

The overall quality of the teaching of English is very good. Oral language development is given due attention at each class level, although it is recommended that a more co-ordinated whole-school approach to phonics be adopted. Poetry is explored at most class
levels. Standards in reading are good to very good. Very commendable attention is given to providing differentiated instruction in reading. The approaches used in Reading Recovery are disseminated throughout the school. Guided Reading is working very well in the infant and junior classes. In striving for excellence, the school should implement a further-expanded Guided Reading programme. The school contains a good selection of books. Overall, however, classroom libraries need to be further developed. Very good attention is given to developing pupils’ writing skills in the infant classes. Pupils write in a variety of genres and have a good understanding of grammar. Teachers’ expectations for written work should be higher, however, and greater emphasis should be placed on monitoring pupils’ writing throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good, with some very good practice in evidence. Oral mathematics is taught effectively throughout the school. Concepts are explained and developed very carefully. A good range of concrete materials is used, although there is a need to further develop mathematics-rich environments in some classrooms. Maths games, interactive whiteboards and the school’s website are skilfully used to reinforce concepts. Good station teaching was observed in some classrooms. There is a need, however, to review the structure of differentiated supports and the roles of personnel in some settings. While pupils are given useful strategies to develop problem-solving skills, it is recommended that these be further expanded in some classrooms.

- The quality of the teaching and learning in SPHE is good. Teachers organise a range of well-organised activities and lessons. Appropriate emphasis is placed on talk and discussion. Circle time is used effectively, with team teaching used to provide each pupil with ample opportunity to participate.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. Learning-support and resource provision is very well co-ordinated. Pupil records are comprehensive and detailed. Individual education plans (IEPs) are regularly reviewed. Parents work closely with teachers on devising and implementing the IEPs. Targets are appropriately based on the recommendations in psychological and other relevant reports. Very skilful teaching was observed in the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Units. The school ethos is very conducive to catering for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs.
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 would like to thank the Inspectors for their professionalism and courtesy throughout the W.S.E. Their support and co-operative interactions with the school community ensured the W.S.E was a very positive experience for all involved. They offered very insightful and constructive advice throughout the week. As a Board we are very pleased with the outcomes and their acknowledgement of the excellence we strive for in all we do in our school.

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 has read the report carefully and has initiated action on the recommendations. All members of the school community will have a role in addressing the recommendations.