Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

Gaelscoil Longfoirt
Longford, Co. Longford
Roll Number: 20083S

Date of inspection: 15 October 2010
1. Introduction

This is a co-educational, all-Irish school under the patronage of Foras Patrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge. The majority of pupils come from the town of Longford or the surrounding area. The school was established in 1998 and it is now situated in a building that is leased from the Gaelic Athletic Association. There are eight class-teachers and two learning-support teachers on staff. The enrolment amounts to 199 pupils and the attendance is good. This was the first evaluation made of the work of the school. 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 various partners are welcome to play a role in the functioning of the school and the endeavours of the Board of Management and the support of parents contribute greatly to the work of the school.
- The Principal and the in-school management team are to be highly commended on the very effective leadership they give to the school.
- A welcoming, Gaelic atmosphere pervades the school.
- All the teachers work collaboratively and diligently.
- The quality of whole-school planning is good.
- During the evaluation, the pupils were courteous, showed an interest in their work and participated actively in the activities organised for them.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the teachers place a greater emphasis on planning for the differentiation of class work for the various ability levels.
- It is recommended that there be a more systematic approach to the teaching of creative writing in Irish.
- It is recommended that there be more extensive use of in-class support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils with learning difficulties.
3. Quality of School Management

- The chairperson provides very effective leadership for the board of management, the members of which fulfil their obligations conscientiously. It is a priority of the board to make permanent accommodation available for the school.

- The principal is to be commended on the diligent work that she has done since 1998 in order to bring about the growth and development of the school. She demonstrates a loyalty to the school as well as effective managerial ability. The school has a deputy principal and three special-duties teachers. Responsibilities are allocated to these teachers in accordance with the needs of the school and these duties are capably discharged.

- The school maintains very good relations and communication with the community. The parents’ association provides on-going support for the development and progress of the school. Parents play an active role in the drawing up of school policies. They also play their part in organising extra-curricular activities and special occasions. The parents organise various fund-raising events. They also assist with the maintenance and cleaning of the school.

- Formal meetings with parents are convened each year in February and they are given oral reports on the progress of the pupils. Written reports are sent to parents at the end of the school year. The school provides courses in Irish for parents, an initiative which helps greatly to promote the ethos of the school.

- Good habits of behaviour are cultivated among the pupils. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the school. Rules and procedures are implemented fairly.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and self-evaluation is very good. Effective co-operation is evident among the partners in the planning process. The school plan comprises a wide range of administrative and curricular policies that are suited to the needs of the school. The school has identified priorities for the review and development of particular policies. The school recently made effective use of the publication *Looking at Our School* to carry out a self-evaluation of its practices and policies.

- This effective planning provides helpful guidance for the teachers regarding their classroom planning and practice. Classroom planning and recording of progress are generally good. However, it is recommended that the teachers place a greater emphasis on planning for the differentiation of class work for the various ability levels, particularly for pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties.

Child protection policy and procedures

- The 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 teachers go about their work with diligence, commitment and professionalism. Various displays are used throughout the school to stimulate the curiosity of the pupils and to consolidate learning. The pupils are encouraged to do their best. The school merits high praise for the respect for Irish heritage that is fostered among the pupils. Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT). In certain instances, a greater emphasis could be placed on the fostering of the pupils’ listening skills. Standardised attainment tests are administered in English and Mathematics and appropriate records are kept of the outcomes.

- The quality of teaching in Irish is good. Very effective use is made of a range of activities and resources to develop the pupils’ ability to speak the language. There is a plentiful supply of printed materials in the majority of classrooms. It is recommended that there be a more systematic approach to the teaching of creative writing in Irish. Very good use is made of the integrated language programme Séideán Sí. Spelling, grammar and the language functions receive due attention. The school should ensure that the needs of the various ability levels are addressed during reading lessons.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. The pupils’ speaking and listening skills are developed in a structured way. There is effective development of phonological awareness and word-recognition skills. Standards in reading are generally good. It is recommended, however, that reading material be more carefully differentiated in accordance with the pupils’ ability. Very good work has been done to enable pupils to plan, draft and edit their written work in a variety of genres. While most of the written work is presented neatly, it is recommended that there be a whole-school approach to the development of handwriting.

- The quality of teaching, learning and attainment in Mathematics is good. Due attention is paid to the various strands of the Primary School Curriculum. On the whole, the lessons are clearly presented and productive activities are organised for the pupils. There is a commendable emphasis on the language and skills of Mathematics. The majority of pupils are successful in learning number facts (tables) and completing number operations. There is scope for a greater emphasis on solving oral problems throughout the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Social, Personal and Health Education is very good. Lessons are conducted effectively. Various teaching methods that match the abilities and interests of the pupils are used. Effective use is made of paired work, circle time and ICT. The work is integrated cleverly with themes and activities from other areas of the curriculum.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Very good supplementary teaching is provided for pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties. The teaching is lively, creative and effective. Use is made of ICT, games and worthwhile tasks during the sessions. The learning programmes drawn up for individual pupils are of a high standard in general, although the learning objectives could be clearer and more measurable in certain instances. It is recommended that copies of the individual learning programmes be made available to the class teachers.
Commendable variety was observed in the supplementary teaching, with support being provided in both the classroom setting and the support-teachers’ rooms. It is recommended that there be even greater use of in-class support.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
This is a translation of the school response which was submitted in Irish.

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

Gaelscoil Longfoirt wishes to thank the Inspectorate and the Department of Education and Skills for the support and understanding afforded during the whole-school evaluation on 15 October 2010. The board of management, the staff and the parents welcome the evaluation process and the content of the report which is just, fair and positive.

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 of Gaelscoil Longfoirt accepts the recommendations and conclusions of the report. They will be taken into account in advancing the school’s strategic action plan. Planning and development are underway with a view to matching class work to the various ability levels. More extensive use is being made of in-class support for pupils with special needs and pupils with learning difficulties. Attention will be paid to developing a more systematic approach to the teaching of creative writing in Irish throughout the school.