Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Éinne,
Spiddal, Co. Galway
Roll Number: 20115F

Date of inspection: 23 February 2012
1. Introduction

Scoil Éinne, Spiddal, Co Galway is a co-educational primary school. The boys’ and girls’ schools in Spiddal were amalgamated in 2000. The building was extended in 2008. Today the school consists of an attractive, functional and suitable building and grounds.

The school is located in a Gaeltacht area and makes a commendable effort to promote the Irish language. The Catholic Bishop of Galway is school’s patron. There are eight mainstream teachers and an administrative principal on staff. A learning support teacher and a resource teacher are based in the school and a second resource teacher works in the school on a part-time basis. There are 188 pupils enrolled at present. The attendance record of the majority of pupils is very good.

An evaluation of the school was carried out in February 2012. The focus of this evaluation was the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Geography. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 works diligently on behalf of the school
- The teachers employ a variety of effective teaching methods
- The management of pupils is very good at all class levels
- A good standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is evident in a wide range of curricular areas.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the planning process and detail be reviewed, both whole-school planning and teachers’ classroom planning
- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on self-evaluation in the school
- It is recommended that the duties of the in-school management team be reviewed in the context of the recognised priorities of the school, particularly in terms of curricular and leadership matters
- It is recommended that the school timetable and individual teachers’ timetables be reviewed, to ensure that priority is given to teaching and learning during the school day.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted in accordance with the rules of the Department of Education and Skills. There are at least six meetings of the board a year. Individual board members have been assigned specific roles. The treasurer presents a financial report at each board meeting. The school accounts are audited annually, in accordance with the Education Act (1998). It is recommended that the board discuss the quality of education, in terms of pupil achievement, more regularly, for example by considering the outcomes of standardised tests in Irish, English and Mathematics.

- The principal carries her administrative and organisational duties conscientiously. The principal's vision for the school is that all pupils should be happy and that they should receive a broad and balanced education. It is now recommended that the curricular and leadership responsibilities of each member of the in-school management team be reviewed, to ensure that the school's priorities are being addressed as effectively as possible from year to year.

- The school building and grounds are effectively maintained. The board of management ensures that there is a commendable store of educational resources available in the school. These resources are used to enhance the teaching and learning process. More books in Irish, however, should be made available in classrooms. The work of the secretary and the work of the special needs assistants (SNAs) contribute greatly to the smooth running of the school.

- There is a parents' association in the school and parents participate in various aspects of school life. Parent-teacher meetings are organised annually and a written report on the progress of their children is sent to parents at the end of each school year. A substantial number of parents indicated, in the questionnaires distributed as part of this whole-school evaluation, that their children are progressing well at school, that the school has a pleasant atmosphere and that they are satisfied with the overall work of the school.

- The management of pupils in this school is very good. Pupils work diligently in class and in the various activities organised during the school day. They are confident and demonstrate good knowledge of the work covered. The responses in pupils' questionnaires indicate that a very high proportion of pupils consider this to be a good school and indicate that pupils feel they are progressing well in reading and Mathematics.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- There is scope for development in certain aspects of the whole-school planning process. Relevant administrative policies and curricular plans are available and emphasis is placed on Irish and on the Gaeltacht status of the school in the planning documentation. It is recommended now, however, that a specific programme for the review of the various policies be implemented. As part of this process, it is recommended that the views of parents be sought in a more formal way, so that they can have a more effective input into school matters. It is also recommended that a process of self-evaluation be instigated in a strategic progressive manner.

- Each teacher in the school prepares schemes of work, both long-term and short-term. There is scope for development, however, in some aspects of classroom planning. In these cases, it is recommended that far more emphasis be placed on written preparation
to ensure that it is appropriate as a teaching aid. Each teacher maintains a monthly record of the work they have done. It is recommended, however, that the same system be implemented for these records throughout the school.

- Each teacher has drawn up a timetable. It is recommended, however, that each timetable be reviewed. It is recommended that all teachers adopt the same practice and understanding in respect of the time allocation for curricular areas, assembly periods, and recreation periods throughout the day. A formal assembly takes place in the school hall each morning under the direction of the principal. It is recommended now that this practice be reviewed to ensure that it is worthwhile. There is a need to review the frequency and duration of assemblies and to review the input of teachers in the assembly period. The school should ensure that it is fulfilling the conditions in Circular 11/95 *Time in School* in this work.

- Confirmation was provided by the school authorities that the Board of Management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, without modification or amendment, 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 quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with much very good work covered. The teachers use a variety of effective teaching methods. The teachers motivate pupils and they provide them with regular positive feedback. The majority of pupils have a commendable knowledge of the work done in English, Irish, Mathematics and Geography.

- An appropriate emphasis is placed on assessment throughout the school and suitable records are kept on pupils' progress. The teachers regularly monitor pupils' written work and this work is good at each class level.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good in the school. The pupils express themselves fluently in each class. Creditable emphasis is placed on accuracy in pronunciation in many of the classes. The pupils read fluently and discuss what they have read with understanding and confidence. Exceptional work is being done in reading in some classes. It is recommended that the whole staff discuss this good practice as part of the self-evaluation process, and that the effective teaching methods employed in these classes be implemented throughout the school. It would be worthwhile also augmenting class libraries by providing more books in Irish. Pupils are given opportunities of to engage in functional and creative writing. There is a need, however, to further develop the independent writing skills of pupils in some classes.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. While emphasis is placed on oral-language development in most classes, it is recommended that a whole-school oral language programme be implemented for English. The recitation, performance and writing of poetry are good at most class levels, although there is a need to place more emphasis on the study of poetry in some classrooms. Standards in reading are good. Classroom libraries contain a wide range of books. Good written work, in a variety of genres, is evident in pupils' copybooks. It would be worthwhile displaying more samples of pupils' written work in classrooms.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. A substantial number of pupils have a very good understanding of the material covered and it is clear that a
positive attitude towards Mathematics is cultivated in the school. Posters and concrete mathematical materials are used in the classrooms to enhance the learning process. The facts, concepts and language of Mathematics are competently taught in almost all classrooms. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the consolidation of mathematical terminology, and on activity, discovery and mental work. It would be worthwhile now placing more emphasis on developing pupils’ estimation skills and on giving them more regular opportunities to solve mathematical problems.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Geography is good. Very good work on the development of pupils’ graphical skills and on the study of other European countries was observed in some classes. Interesting projects on geographical topics are undertaken in the middle and senior classes. Appropriate emphasis is placed on environmental awareness and care in the majority of classes. It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the development of geographical skills in some classes and that less emphasis be placed on workbooks.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- A stimulating educational environment has been created in the learning support and resource classrooms. Pupils are given support in English and Mathematics. Appropriate planning is done, with individual education plans (IEPs) and individual profiles and learning programmes (IPLPs) devised, following a consultative process. It is recommended that clearer learning objectives be set out in these plans and that systematic assessment of pupils’ progress be carried out based on these learning objectives.

Published October 2012