

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Carrickleck National School
Carrickleck, Kingscourt, County Meath
Uimhir rolla: 14348T**

Date of inspection: 19th October 2011



1. Introduction

Carrickleck National School, under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath, is a two teacher rural school situated in the parish of Kingscourt in North County Meath. The school currently has 30 pupils enrolled and attendance patterns are very good. The school participated in the programme, Giving Children an Even Break which was funded by the Department of Education and Skills from 2000-2008.

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 is commended for the provision of excellent accommodation and playing facilities for pupils.
- Staff demonstrates commendable dedication to the school.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The principal works diligently to ensure a well-ordered learning environment.
- A warm familial atmosphere is in evidence within the school.
- Pupils are well-behaved and their engagement in learning activities is particularly praiseworthy.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs within the school is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- School self-evaluation and improvement initiatives should be developed through formal, systematic review of school policies within the framework of a strategic three year plan.
- The science and visual arts policies should include cyclical programmes which support the implementation of broad and balanced curricula within the school's multi-class context.
- Curricular and organisational duties should be clearly delineated for post-holders to support ongoing school development.
- The school community should continue their efforts to establish a parents' association in line with the Education Act (1998, Section 26) to further enhance the consultative process between home and school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is good. The board is commended for its provision of well-maintained school facilities and in particular for the successful

completion of an astro-turf enclosed playing area. The board, under the leadership of the recently appointed chairperson, has initiated a purposeful review of key organisational policies to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. Sustained involvement of the board in whole-school review and development is advised. Financial records are maintained and certified by external auditors on an annual basis.

- The teaching principal works diligently to ensure a well-ordered learning environment for pupils. Questionnaires distributed to parents during the whole school evaluation indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the way in which the school is organised and managed. The principal, together with the special duties teacher, demonstrates commendable commitment and teamwork in their fulfilment of a range of duties. However, it is recommended that some separate curricular and organisational duties be delineated and assigned to each individual to further enhance school development.
- The ancillary staff attached to this school contributes significantly to the smooth running of the school and also enriches a range of co-curricular activities.
- A wide range of resources is provided and used productively to support teaching and learning within this school. Some effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) was evident during the evaluation. The school is commended for its successful establishment of a book rental scheme for all pupils.
- The management of pupils is very good. The pupils presented as highly motivated, courteous and co-operative during the evaluation. Pupil-teacher interactions are mutually respectful and a warm familial atmosphere is evident. Pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that they feel safe and happy in school. The participation of pupils in sporting and extra-curricular activities has been successfully promoted within this school community.
- A variety of approaches has been adopted to promote positive communication between home and school. The board of management is advised to continue their efforts to facilitate the establishment of a parents' association in line with the Education Act (1998, section 26). Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaires stated they were satisfied with the school and feel welcome there. The school is advised to provide parents with their children's standardised test scores in written format as outlined in circular 0138/2006.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- While the school has a range of curricular and organisational policies, there remains scope for development. Some curricular policies need to be contextualised to address the priorities of the school. Consideration should be afforded to developing a two year plan for Science and the Visual Arts to enhance the provision of broad and balanced curricula for pupils in the multi-class setting. Aspects of a small number of policy documents have yet to be implemented. Some organisational policies are currently being updated in accordance with best practice.
- The school engages in some school review practices and effectively analyse assessment data to monitor pupils' progress. School self-evaluation and improvement initiatives should be further developed through formal, systematic review of curricular and organisational policies within the framework of a strategic three year plan. Policy review should include collaboration with all partners within this school community.
- All teachers provide appropriate monthly reports, short term and long-term planning.

- 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

- Tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán mhaith. Léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint oiriúnach ar chomhréir na teanga agus líofacht réasúnta agus iad ag caint ar théamaí éagsúla. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go cumasach agus is féidir leo raon leathan de dhánta a aithris le cruinneas. Cuirtear béim láidir ar fhoghraíocht chruinn agus forbraítear scileanna réamhléitheoireachta na ndaltaí go torthúil. Léann na daltaí téascleabhair le tuiscint agus baintear usáid fhóinteach as úrscéalta i gcuid de na ranganna. Moltar an dea-chleachtas seo a leathnú tríd an scoil. Tugtar deiseanna do na daltaí scríobh go neamhspleách agus léiríonn siad torthaí foghlama sásúla.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is of a good standard. Pupils display an appropriate mastery of the structure of the language and they speak with reasonable fluency on a range of themes. Pupils' listening skills are developed competently and they are able to recite a range of poetry with accuracy. Strong emphasis is placed on accurate pronunciation and pupils pre-reading skills are successfully developed. Pupils read text books with understanding and novels are used purposefully in some classes. It is recommended that this good practice be extended throughout the school. Opportunities are provided for pupils to write independently and they show satisfactory learning outcomes.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Discrete oral language lessons extend pupils' vocabulary and develop their language skills effectively. Poetry is explored in creative ways to enrich pupils' language. The school has successfully nurtured a culture of reading for pleasure using a wide range of reading material and initiatives. Pupils read with great fluency and understanding which is reflected in their assessment data. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their independent writing skills and their positive learning outcomes reflect appropriate mastery of writing conventions and genre.
- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high quality. Concepts are clearly explained and resources are used effectively to promote pupil engagement and understanding in their learning. A commendable emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' mental mathematics skills. The on-going promotion of pupils' estimation and problem-solving skills is acknowledged.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Visual Arts is good. Pupils are enabled to use a wide range of media and techniques. The facilitation of activities from the *Fabric and Fibre* strand is praiseworthy. Pupils are provided with opportunities to look and respond to their own work and the work of a small number of renowned artists. Further development of this element of the curriculum is recommended. Pupil portfolios are used purposefully to monitor their skill development.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. Pupils' involvement in the school garden has contributed positively to their scientific learning.

They have been actively involved in a suitable range of investigations. Further development of scientific skills should include a stronger emphasis on the concept of fair testing and the make and design elements of the science curriculum. Pupils demonstrate great awareness with regards appropriate care for the environment

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Skilful teacher questioning and employment of methodologies facilitate an integrated learning experience for pupils. Lessons are sufficiently challenging for pupils of varying abilities. They demonstrate positive learning outcomes commensurate with their abilities. Pupils' work is closely monitored and constructive feedback is provided.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individual education plans are prepared in consultation with teachers and parents and used purposefully to guide provision. Learning targets are sufficiently specific and aligned to pupils' prioritised needs in Mathematics and English. A suitable range of assessment tools is used purposefully.
- The part-time learning support teacher implements the *Reading Recovery* programme in a very effective manner. The early-intervention and in-class support programmes in infant and junior classes is highly commended. Consideration should be given to extending in-class support to middle and senior classes.
- Lessons are well structured and teacher-pupil interactions are affirming. It is evident that the supplementary support given to pupils is impacting very positively on their development.

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 of Carrickleck N.S. welcomes the findings of the WSE Report and wishes to convey its gratitude to the inspector for the professional and courteous manner in which the WSE was conducted.

We welcome the affirmation of the work done by the teachers, pupils, parents, the school community and the Board of Management.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

1. The Enrolment and Admissions Policy for Carrickleck N.S. has been reviewed, amended and ratified by the Board in November 2011. The school policy on Assessment has been reviewed, amended and ratified at a Board meeting on the 13th March 2012.
2. A review of the duties assigned to the Special Duties Teacher has been undertaken by the Board and additional specific duties have been assigned to this post.
3. Following the recommendation of the inspector and consultations with the staff and parents, the school has launched a new Literary Initiative for the pupils in First Class. A programme of work has been agreed and parents and teachers offer in-class literacy support for the pupils.
4. The Board of Management has provided funding for an Interactive Whiteboard, which was purchased and installed in the Junior Room in January 2012.
5. A Parents' Support Group was established in November 2011 following the recommendation of the inspector. Monthly meetings have taken place and parents are involved in the Literacy Initiative and other school activities.
6. Written reports of standardised test results have been given to parents at the recent parent/teacher meetings held in February 2012 and will also be given in written format in the annual school reports which will issue in mid-June each year.
7. The school has committed itself to a process of self-evaluation and improvement initiatives over a three year period during which a selection of organisational and curricular policies will be reviewed and ratified in consultation with staff, parents and members of the Board of Management.
8. The science and visual arts policies will be reviewed and revised within the framework of a 2 year cyclical programme to take account of the school's multi-class context.

The Board of Management in consultation with teachers and parents will continue to implement all the other findings and recommendations in this report.

