

**AnRoinnOideachaisagusEolaíochta
Department of Education and Science**

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Togher Boys' NS
Togher
Cork.
Uimhir rolla:13980L**

Date of inspection: 24 November 2008

Whole-school evaluation

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WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Togher Boy's National School was undertaken in November 2008. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The evaluation focused on aspects of the school's provision including management, teaching and learning, planning and supports for pupils, with a particular focus on the provision of English as an Additional Language (EAL). 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Togher Boys' National School is situated approximately five kilometres from the city centre. The school building, erected in 1971, shares its campus with Scoil an AtharMaitiú and has undergone major refurbishment over the years. Pupils are enrolled from junior infants to sixth class and are drawn, in the main, from the immediate environs of the parish. The school's population includes a

sizeable number of newcomer pupils, numbering sixty seven in total, comprising eleven nationalities. Housing in the area is a combination of local authority and private developments. Togher is part of the *Rapid* programme, a Government initiative which targets disadvantaged areas in the country and the focus of State resources under the National Development Plan. The school was supported under the *Giving Children and Even Break* scheme and received additional staffing and funding. The school did not achieve band status under the *DEIS* initiative and following announcements in the recent budget, the school may lose its acquired concessions. The school has expressed concerns at the prospect of withdrawal of any additional support and requests a review of its current status given that a considerable number of families within the community are experiencing social and financial deprivation.

The last school report was furnished in April 2000 and enrolment then was 323 pupils. The report indicated commendable work was being undertaken in a number of curricular areas, most notably in Mathematics and in Social and Environmental Studies.

The following table provides an overview of the enrolment and staffing in the school at the time of the evaluation:

	Number
Total number of teachers on the school staff	23
Number of mainstream class teachers	14
Total number of teachers working in support roles	5
Number of language support teachers	3
Special needs assistants	9
Total number of pupils enrolled in the school	297
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	67

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision

The school is under the patronage of the Bishop of Cork and Ross. It fosters a positive Christian ethos where pupils are encouraged to care for each other. The school's motto "Education and self-worth through care, respect and cooperation" supports the staff's aim to provide a caring learning environment which will develop the whole child and prepare him for the demands of further education and continuing change in society. Pupils of all nationalities are welcome to the school and every attempt is made to include them fully in school life.

1.2 Board of management

The members of the board of management constitute a dedicated body that are intent on providing a quality learning environment for both staff and pupils. Meetings are convened on average five or six times in the year. The board aims to foster good communication with staff and parents and to this end an agreed report is devised and disseminated following each meeting. Finances are managed effectively and there is a clearly defined system in place for annual accounting and auditing procedures. The board is involved in the whole-school planning process and policies are discussed, reviewed and ratified regularly. It is recommended that all policies brought before the board are signed and dated at ratification stage. The board commendably makes a fund available to staff for their continuing professional development. Members of the current board have not received training and the sourcing and provision of such training would further enhance their contribution to school management.

Current concerns of the board are the loss of additional funding and staffing under the *Giving Children an Even Break* scheme. The board maintains that access to a translation service would greatly facilitate the enrolment of newcomer pupils in the school. They further maintain that the provision of an immersion programme for the older newcomer pupils would assist and ease their induction to school life. Management is therefore advised to utilise its current complement of EAL teachers in a manner best befitting the learning needs of its newcomer pupils.

1.3 In-school management

The in-school management team is comprised of the principal, the deputy principal, two assistant principals and six special duties teachers. The principal, appointed to this position in 1999, is diligent and conscientious. He is committed to the progressive development of the school both organisationally, structurally and at systems development level. He has made sincere efforts to advance whole-school planning since his appointment. He is commended for the provision of high standards of accommodation in the school. Activities are well organised and official records are carefully maintained.

Responsibilities assigned to post holders focus, in the main, on curricular and on organisational matters. Duties are carried out conscientiously and with commitment and contribute positively to school management and organisation. It is advised that current duties be revised to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of curricular, organisational and pastoral duties assigned to each post-holder and that these are matched to the priority needs of the school. The in-school management team is also advised to further develop its instructional leadership role in guiding teaching and learning.

Meetings of the in-school management team are convened prior to staff meetings. It is recommended that an agreed agenda be set for these meetings that will facilitate a forum for all post-holders to engage in collaborative decision-making processes to further progress teaching and learning in the school. In line with established good practice, an agreed report on key decisions should subsequently be available to all staff. Staff meetings are held regularly and it is suggested that the manner in which the agenda is set for these meetings be reviewed.

School management has been successful in integrating newcomer pupils into the school community for many years. A range of pertinent documents have been translated for newcomer parents and are available in five languages. Commendably, the principal attempts to meet all prospective newcomer parents in advance of their children starting school to ensure familiarity with all aspects of school life. These initiatives bear eloquent testimony to the school's dedication to respect and to valuing difference. In the development of further good practice, management might usefully consider assigning the care of newcomer parents and children, to include pastoral and curricular duties, to a post holder.

1.4 The management of resources

A determined effort is made to ensure that all necessary resources, both personnel and material, are appropriately deployed. There is willingness among staff to support each other and to share expertise with colleagues in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. Commendably, the teaching staff has participated in a variety of in-service initiatives in their ongoing professional development. Within the school's development plan, management is advised to include priority areas identified by staff for future professional development.

The school has three language-support teachers. One of these is assigned to mainstream classroom duties this year in an effort to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio at junior infant level. The school maintains that this strategy will greatly benefit pupils in these formative years of their education. Management is advised to review this policy and to take account of Department of Education and Science(DES) guidelines in the deployment of EAL staff. Teachers have availed of in-service in language support and have identified the need for further in-service to support them in the teaching and learning process in EAL.

Nine special needs assistants are employed to support pupils with special educational needs. One part-time and one full-time secretary provide valuable administrative support and they are to be commended for their dedication and their commitment to duty. Other ancillary staff, including cleaners, caretakers and traffic warden, are also commended on their diligence in maintaining a clean, attractive and safe environment.

The school has invested generously in a range of resources which is used purposefully to enhance teaching and learning across the curriculum. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is duly recognised as a valuable resource to support pupils' learning. Computers are available in each

classroom together with accompanying broadband and digital projector facilities. An extensive range of ICT facilities is also provided in the school's computer room and these are used to considerable effect.

The school's environs are maintained to a praiseworthy standard. Clearly, the pupils treat the building and surrounds with respect. As part of the school's recent initiative to achieve *Green Flag* status, a team of litter wardens has been established and their work in maintaining a clean school environment is worthy of praise. A number of hard-surface play areas are used for recreational purposes. The school facilities such as the computer room and PE hall are regularly hired to community groups and clubs. In the ongoing development of school facilities, the board is committed to developing an adjacent open community space to include two all-weather pitches.

Staff has succeeded admirably in creating a stimulating learning environment in each classroom. The school's entrance and corridors are utilised to considerable effect for display purposes and to celebrate pupil achievement. Exhibits of pupils' work and photographs commemorating notable events feature prominently. The addition of a notice board welcoming newcomer pupils to the school is also a noteworthy feature.

1.5 Management of relationships and communication with the school community

The parents' association expresses a high level of satisfaction with the school and is particularly appreciative of the efforts of staff in making it a warm and welcoming establishment. Parents meet with teachers formally in November each year and consult with them on an individual basis whenever it is deemed necessary.

Parents are involved in a variety of initiatives to support the school. These include extensive fundraising and the provision of enhanced support for school events as required. Their involvement in activities such as *Mathematics and Literacy for Fun* and in *The Caper Reading Programme* is most commendable.

Effective systems of communication are established between home and school. Parents are regularly informed of school events through notes and through a text-a-parent system. A newsletter is also sent to parents six times in the year detailing school activities and achievements. A comprehensive information booklet is issued to each new parent identifying school procedures, practices and policies. An end of year report outlining pupil progress and achievement is issued to parents in May.

Through the establishment of policy sub-committees, parents have contributed to policy development in the areas of healthy eating, drugs awareness and the code of behaviour, among others. While there is a general consensus that parents have been consulted on selected aspects of policy development, the board of management might now consider establishing structures to ensure more active participation of parents in developing school policy. The principal maintains regular contact with the parent body and commendably attends all parents' association meetings. The parents' association is most appreciative of the provision of a designated meeting room, a facility that has been fitted to the highest standards. The computer room is also available to parents who wish to pursue courses in ICT.

1.6 Management of pupils

Staff is to be commended for the management of pupils' engagement in the life of the school. Staff has devised a creditable range of policies that establish healthy patterns of behaviour and respectful relationships. The school aims to provide a caring learning environment which facilitates the nurturing of each child's potential. This is a school where pupils are happy and valued. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their school, to respect adults and fellow pupils. Teachers demonstrate a thoughtful understanding of the backgrounds and experiences of pupils and have a genuine concern for their progress. Pupils are encouraged to be confident, competent and caring individuals. This positive disposition is reciprocated in the respect and co-operation which pupils offer to teachers and to other staff members. Productive study patterns are effectively established through pupils' participation in the school's homework club. Parents, staff and pupils are to be congratulated on commendable attendance levels.

In the interview with newcomer pupils selected from fifth and sixth classes, all stated that they were benefiting from their time in school. They felt equally comfortable with oral, reading and writing

activities. All found language support to be of help. The majority of pupils stated that PE was their favourite subject and a number of pupils expressed difficulty with Irish, stating it was difficult to understand. When experiencing difficulty in class, pupils stated that they had access to additional support either from peers, from the SNA and from their teachers.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Quality of whole-school planning

The school plan is being systematically developed and a collaborative approach to whole-school planning is gradually being developed. Teachers co-operate with the principal in the formulation of school policies. In order to progress the consultative nature of the planning process and to foster appropriate levels of involvement by all parties, consideration should be given to promoting a greater involvement of the staff in policy development and curriculum implementation.

The school's mission statement and aims are clearly articulated in the school plan. Policies have been devised in response to relevant educational and statutory legislation and the evolving needs of the school. Organisational and administrative policies are comprehensively addressed and include a wide range of statements on health and safety, enrolment, parental complaints, supervision, administration of medicine, multiculturalism and anti-racism amongst many others. These policies support efficient in-school organisation.

Some curricular plans have been devised by post-holders. It is recommended that the process by which plans are devised be reviewed with the intention of ensuring that plans are drawn up collaboratively on a whole-school basis. This collaborative whole-school approach will ensure that all teachers are familiar with the implementation of the curriculum throughout the school. Priority areas for improvement are incorporated into the school development planning schedule and review of some curricular plans has been initiated. This review process should, however, further adapt policies to meet the needs of the school. Clarifying content, agreeing collaboratively the practical implementation of all aspects of the plan and ensuring appropriate continuity and progression from class to class should be addressed. Teachers' long-term schemes of work are included and viewed as part of curricular planning. The inclusion of teachers' plans does not reflect the whole-school planning process and such a practice should be discontinued. As such, the whole-school plan should be utilised to guide individual teachers' planning.

2.2 Quality of whole-school planning for EAL

There are detailed policies in place that cover educational provision for newcomer pupils and multicultural and anti-racial issues. These policies have been compiled in a careful and considered manner. They prove useful in ascertaining the range and direction of approaches to teaching English as an additional language. Outlined therein are important statements that guide provision in terms of principles, enrolment and support strategies. Appropriately, these plans are seen as an evolving entity and to this end staff is urged to include a range of methodologies and assessment strategies that will guide teaching and learning in the ongoing support of the language needs of newcomer pupils. Fifteen newcomer pupils are currently in receipt of language support in excess of the recommended two year period. Staff is advised to develop a process that will determine when it is appropriate to discontinue language support. The regular application of the *Integrate Ireland Language and Training* [IILT] benchmarks will greatly facilitate this process.

2.3 Quality of classroom planning including planning for EAL

At classroom level, teachers are focused on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum which is rich and challenging. Most teachers devote considerable time and energy to preparing and organising resources for their classrooms, thus ensuring attractive and engaging learning environments for their pupils.

Mainstream class teachers engage in long and short-term planning and record progress in curriculum areas, though different approaches are used and detail varies. In some cases teachers make reference to specific learning objectives, differentiation, resources, teaching strategies and assessment. They organise their planning in line with the respective strands and strand units of curricular areas. Opportunities for integration and differentiation are noted and the link to classroom practice is clear. This commendable approach to short-term planning should be extended in an effort

to bring consistency to planning throughout the school. Teachers use a variety of templates in planning and recording of work. It is recommended that staff consider drafting an agreed comprehensive format for long and short-term planning and for the recording of progress in each curriculum area.

It is further recommended that provision be made in all short-term planning for mediation of curriculum content for newcomer pupils for whom English is an additional language and that differentiated approaches be documented at classroom level. Currently, some monthly progress records contribute effectively to the review of the implementation of the school plan by focusing on the achievement of learning outcomes. Ideally all monthly progress records should allow for similar reflection on outcomes, so that pupil learning can be extended. It is recommended that the recording of this work be linked to the overall assessment priorities of the school. Such an approach would contribute immensely to the ongoing school based self-evaluation process.

2.4 Child protection policy and procedures

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Science Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Science, September 2001). Confirmation was also provided 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.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 English

A whole-school plan for English has been adopted and content objectives are delineated for each class grouping. Whole-school approaches on a range of other aspects of the English programme such as poetry, spelling, phonics, oral language, novel, reading and writing should now be considered. The identification of effective approaches and methodologies should also be documented in the school plan.

Appropriate attention is paid to the development of pupils' oral language skills which are taught through discrete oral language lessons, through reading, writing and through integration across curricular areas. Suitable activities, using appropriate resources, are developed to enhance pupils' listening skills. A commercial oral language programme is used prudently in some classes. Appropriate use is made of story, poetry, large format books, textbooks, workbooks and worksheets to engage pupils in talk and discussion in the infant classes. In the middle and senior classes pupils are provided with opportunities to engage in debate, reporting and storytelling. However, it is recommended that a whole-school approach to oral language development be adopted. The school's oral language programme should be explicitly linked to the content objectives as outlined in curriculum documents. It should also target the development of specific oral language skills and the enrichment of pupils' vocabulary.

Emergent reading skills are developed gainfully in the junior classes. Suitable emphasis is placed on reading readiness activities including knowledge of the conventions of print, basic sight vocabulary and word identification strategies. Commercial resources are used purposefully to develop pupils' phonemic awareness. Good visual and aural examples are used in supporting the development of pupils' phonological awareness. Appropriately, story telling, poetry and rhyme feature prominently in the junior classes. In the middle and senior classes pupils are encouraged to respond to poetry. However, greater emphasis should now be placed on learning poetry. A compilation of suitable poems for all class levels would further promote poetry recitation throughout the school.

In general, pupils demonstrate a keen interest in reading. Stimulating print-rich environments, word wall displays and the use of flashcards contribute to the development of pupils' sight vocabulary. Opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in collaborative reading activities using visually appealing large-format books and shared-reading experiences with parents. The implementation of the *Literacy for Fun* scheme is indeed praiseworthy. At the emergent reading stage, it is suggested

that more structured informal reading activity precede the introduction of a formal reading programme. In the middle and senior classes a variety of reading material, including class readers, novels, library books and newspaper articles, are used to encourage reading for pleasure and for information. Good use is made of the novel to stimulate discussion, encourage reflection and study character development. Most pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate ability to read accurately and to assimilate and understand content. However, focused attention on the development of specific reading skills should be a salient feature of reading lessons. It is recommended that differentiated reading programmes be put in place throughout the school to accommodate the wide range of reading abilities among pupils. To this end a wider range of appropriate reading material should be provided in all class libraries.

Handwriting is taught systematically and examination of copybooks indicates that pupils' skills are being developed in a progressive manner. Good penmanship is a noteworthy feature throughout the school and in general, the quality of pupils' presentation of written work is commendable. Pupils are encouraged to observe the conventions of writing. Worthwhile writing activities such as daily news, book reviews, poetry and stories demonstrate pupils ability to write in an age-appropriate register of language. In infant classes, letter formation skills are appropriately developed and expanded to initiate sentence formation. In general, process writing is cultivated in the middle and senior classes and writing in different genres is undertaken. However, greater opportunity should be provided to all pupils to engage in writing activities on a more regular basis. Displaying pupils written work and further use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) would also greatly enrich the writing experience.

3.2 Mathematics

A whole-school plan for Mathematics has been devised. The school is commended for the documentation of screening checklists to be used in senior infant classes and it is advised that such checklists be developed for all classes in a targeted strategic manner. The plan emphasises the development of mathematical skills and some direction on differentiation procedures, homework and the role of information technologies in teaching and learning is also provided. Mathematical literacy and application of problem-solving strategies as necessary skills are highlighted. It is recommended, however, that a review of the plan should focus on the teaching of mathematical language in a progressive manner and that the potential of the school's environment as a resource for learning in Mathematics be further developed.

Classrooms are characterised by the effective creation of mathematical areas and the prominent display of commercial posters and teacher-designed charts in most classrooms. Teachers succeed in promoting a positive learning environment and motivate pupils through structured lessons. While whole-class teaching is the predominant methodology, in some cases, pupils collaborate in pairs and in small groups when completing assignments. This approach fosters co-operative learning skills and facilitates teachers in supporting individual pupils as needed. An appropriate amount of discussion and engagement in mental mathematical activities is a feature of some classes. Further emphasis on teaching mathematical language and eliciting this vocabulary from pupils is recommended in all classes, particularly for pupils whose first language is not English. The use of concrete materials is purposeful and recognised by staff as a means of developing pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. The school has invested in a range of resources to support activity-based methodologies and these, together with teacher-generated materials, facilitate participative teaching approaches. Some equipment is centrally stored, is readily accessed and used as needed. An inventory of resources would be beneficial in further supporting the effective use of manipulatives throughout the school. Examination of standardised test results show a wide range in ability and suggests that cooperative group learning activities and the setting of specific targets would be of assistance in further raising overall standards.

A renewed focus on teaching common procedures in relation to memorisation of number facts, computational work and tables in an active, engaging manner was noted. While problem-solving strategies are taught in all classes there is some inconsistency in approach throughout the school. Consideration should be given to agreed approaches with further attention paid to the development of pupils' higher order and critical thinking skills. The practice of sharing learning objectives with pupils was a notable feature in some classes. A review of work previously completed confirms appropriate achievement across much of the mathematics programme, with pupils' written work being regularly monitored. It is recommended that copybook work be a prominent feature in all classes in supporting consolidation and revision of concepts taught.

3.3 Assessment

Teacher observation, teacher devised tests and regular monitoring of pupils' written work are among the assessment modes employed by mainstream class teachers. In some instances teachers regularly use assessments to evaluate their mediation of the curriculum and to inform planning. Phonic checklists, dictation and spelling tests are also used purposefully. Further assessment strategies as outlined in the school plan include pupils' profiles, self-assessment by pupils, tracking records and an annual review of standardised test results. It is recommended that greater focus be directed to the implementation of these forms of assessment with specific emphasis on formative assessment strategies. The school should also now consider developing an approach to recording pupil progress in a more systematic manner. Future development of the policy on assessment should address the need to move to more objective-based planning in order to provide a more appropriate framework for developing assessment procedures. The staff is commended for the creation of a whole-school perspective on pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Teacher-designed assessment tools are complemented by use of formal and standardised tests namely *Micro-T* and *Sigma-T*. Additional standardised tests, Drumcondra Reading and Mathematics tests are also administered to the pupils in fifth and sixth class annually. Diagnostic testing, including the *Middle Infant Screening Test* is undertaken by learning-support/resource teachers (LSRTs) to assess learning needs of pupils who may require supplementary support. The results of standardised tests are analysed by class teachers, in conjunction with special education teachers, with a view to assigning additional learning support. It is recommended that these results be also used for further planning and differentiation. Formal parent-teacher meetings take place annually to inform parents of all aspects of their children's progress. It is commendable that the school provides parents with the STEN scores achieved in standardised testing.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORTS FOR PUPILS

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs

Supplementary support for pupils with special educational needs is delivered by four learning support/resource teachers (LSRT). Support for these pupils is provided in the areas of literacy and numeracy offering focused tuition primarily on a withdrawal basis individually or in small groups. A learning-support policy has been devised incorporating the staged approach of identification. Greater focus should now be placed on the implementation of the policy with particular emphasis on procedures regarding continuing and discontinuing supplementary teaching, early intervention, recording of pupil progress and absenteeism.

Lessons are well structured and a supportive and stimulating environment is created for pupils. Judicious use is made of a range of resources to support pupils' learning, including the use of ICT. In general, teachers employ a variety of teaching approaches and learning strategies and these are adapted appropriately to suit pupils needs. Individual educational programmes (IEP's) and individual profile and learning programmes (IPLP's) have been devised by each LSRT for pupils in receipt of support. In some instances, however, there is a need to further refine targets to ensure that objectives are specific to pupils' learning needs and that these objectives can be achieved within the instructional term. A more systematic approach to detailing and recording pupil progress and the achievement of targets is necessary. This practice will facilitate reflective preparation of short-term and long-term plans. Generally, support teachers engage in consultation with mainstream class teachers and with parents. It is recommended that regular formal meetings of the support team be convened to ensure collaboration and co-ordination of practice.

An analysis of standardized test results indicate clearly that there is a need for the introduction of a structured early intervention programme to support the increasing number of pupils who are underperforming in the early years. The in-class model of support should also be explored to provide an opportunity to target the specific needs of pupils in an integrated setting through the use of team and co-operative teaching approaches. Consideration should be given to reviewing caseloads in order to further serve the needs of all pupils who may be experiencing some difficulties. This review might also reconsider the allocation of caseloads to individual members of the support team.

The special needs assistants ably assist teachers in facilitating pupils to access the curriculum in the mainstream setting. However, further consideration should now be given to the role of special need assistants when pupils are absent in order to ensure effective deployment.

4.2 Pupils with English as an additional language

Forty-two newcomer pupils from junior infants to sixth class are currently in receipt of language support. Staff is complimented on the quality service offered to these pupils. Detailed long-term and short-term plans are devised, outlining clear procedures for deploying resources and in delineating support programmes. A notable feature of staff's innovative support of pupils' learning is the practice of introducing pupils to places of interest in the general locality. Staff succeed in creating attractive print-rich learning environments where a broad range of resource materials are sourced and are utilised productively and imaginatively in promoting language acquisition. Staff is urged to add to current displays to reflect the cultural diversity of its pupil population. Pupils are withdrawn either individually or in small groups and class teachers are consulted regularly in a deliberate effort to promote consistency and continuity in programme delivery. Teachers enjoy a good rapport with pupils and they in turn cooperate willingly. They are making good progress in fluency, in reading and in writing tasks. Concerns raised by teachers relate to addressing newcomer pupils' needs, in particular those pupils who present with additional special educational needs.

In the ongoing development of language support, staff might usefully consider broadening the scope of the programme to facilitate the development of key skills in an integrated manner. Staff should gainfully consider an increased use of pupils' home language in the context of everyday teaching and learning experiences. The development of a reception programme would usefully inform pupils of school norms and procedures. In developing increased consistency between classroom and support-learning activities, staff is advised to seek a greater balance between withdrawal and in-class support. Within the context of planning and recording of progress, staff is advised to document a language learning profile for all newcomer pupils and to make greater use of the language proficiency benchmarks in identifying pupils' learning targets and in the regular monitoring of their progress.

4.3 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups

The school enjoys the services of a committed home-school liaison co-ordinator (HSCL). The teacher has served in this position since its inception in 1995. Regular in-service is availed of and close links are maintained with fellow HSCL teachers through attendance at local, regional and national cluster meetings. The high calibre HSCL work in the school contributes significantly to progressing a worthwhile partnership between home, school and community agencies. The extensive programme of events on offer includes not only involving parents in school-based activities such as literacy and numeracy classes, but also training parents to transmit skills learned to other parents. Indeed, a measure of the success of the programme to date has been the school's ability to empower parents to lead worthy initiatives such as "Story Sacks". Parents are invited each year to partake in a variety of activities such as Irish and English classes, and cookery and computers courses, among others. Parents are commended for their commitment to life-long learning with many courses taken to certificate level.

The HSCL service plays a pivotal role in liaising with newcomer parents. Language classes are organised in close cooperation with the neighbouring school. Parents are afforded judicious support as is necessary, through the home visits' programme. Parents and pupils are commended for their recent participation in the "Cork Lifelong Learning Festival" presenting "Together in Diversity – Le Chéile san Éagsúlacht", a celebration of learning and cultural diversity.

5. CONCLUSION

The school has strengths in the following areas:

- The school is characterised by a welcoming, caring and well-ordered school environment where accommodation is of a high standard.
- The principal is diligent and conscientious and is complimented for his commitment to on-going school development and improvement.
- The staff are commended for their high level of expertise and their dedication to the welfare of all pupils
- The ancillary staff are caring and dedicated and are committed to supporting pupil learning.

- Pupils display very mannerly behaviour and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- The school enjoys high levels of support from the general parent body.
- The board of management is supportive, committed and keenly interested in the operation and development of the school
- The provision and use of a broad range of resources including Information and Communication Technology is praiseworthy
- Teaching is purposeful and pupils of all abilities are consistently enabled to engage meaningfully with a wide range of interesting and relevant topics.

The following key recommendations are made in order to further improve the quality of education provided by the school:

- The development of whole-school approaches to planning, to delivery and to the implementation and review of the curriculum should be addressed collaboratively.
- A review of in-school management structures and responsibilities is recommended in addressing the priority needs of the school and in developing the instructional leadership role.
- It is recommended that teachers adopt an objective-based approach to classroom planning in order to facilitate assessment and evaluation of teaching and learning on a whole-school basis.
- It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the development of pupils oral language and reading skills throughout the school.
- An extended use of manipulatives, together with a consistent acquisition of mathematical language throughout the school is recommended. The further development of problem-solving strategies through investigative activity is advised.
- It is recommended that the learning-support and resource caseload be reviewed and that all aspects of the school's learning-support policy be implemented.
- The development of further good practice in planning, recording and provision of support for pupils with special educational needs, including EAL is recommended.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.