

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Áine Naofa
Navan, Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla:00883P**

Date of inspection: 3 October 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Áine Naofa is a co-educational primary school within the town of Navan in County Meath. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath and there are currently 320 pupils enrolled. While there is a large number of pupils with very good attendance levels, there still remains scope for improving pupil attendance levels among a small number of pupils. Worthwhile measures are in place to promote good attendance among these pupils and the board of management is urged to continue building on these practices. During the whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Science was inspected. 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 is very effective in both its organisation and its impact. It works very successfully with the school principal towards the development of the school as a place of very good quality teaching and learning.
- The principal exemplifies the qualities and skills of very effective school leadership.
- The management of pupils is very good. Approaches to promoting positive behaviour are infused by a commitment to the value and uniqueness of each individual pupil.
- A very effective approach to school self-evaluation has been adopted. Priority areas for development have been carefully identified, worthwhile action plans have been implemented and this has led to better learning for pupils.
- The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school with many teachers demonstrating exemplary practice.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in English and Mathematics is very good.
- There is a very strong sense of support teachers and classroom teachers working collaboratively in order to provide pupils with the best possible support for their learning. Their child-centred approach and the commitment to making the best use of available resources in the best interests of the pupils are worthy of commendation.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Chun tabhairt faoi forbairt na Gaeilge, moltar an scéim ghramadaí atá sa phlean scoile a mhúineadh go cuimsitheach agus scéim litriúcháin a leagadh amach. *To progress the development of Irish, it is advised that the grammar scheme that is in the school plan should be comprehensively taught and that a spelling scheme should be laid out.*
- To develop short-term planning further, teachers should ensure that their planning of learning activities is outlined as clearly identified learning objectives and outcomes. Similarly, differentiation activities for either less-able or more-able pupils should be outlined as clearly identified learning objectives and outcomes.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of school management is of a very high standard. The board of management is very effective in both its organisation and its impact. It is commendable that the board is aware of the standards of learning within the school and the aspects of learning currently prioritised for development. It is equally commendable that the board sees and is facilitated in having a role in these areas.
- The principal exemplifies the qualities and skills of very effective leadership. She has been very successful in creating the trust among all stakeholders that is essential for a truly collaborative working relationship. The in-school management team is hardworking, very effective in discharging their duties and much richness is added to curriculum provision because of their work in extra and co-curricular activities. Working with the principal, the in-school management team is developing its understanding of curriculum leadership as it pertains to overseeing curriculum implementation.
- The school is very well resourced, with these resources being used successfully within classrooms to contribute to the teaching of very good quality lessons. This includes the use of tablet computers which are being used effectively across the school to bring an added dimension to lessons. The school building is very well maintained and a clean and safe learning environment has been created for pupils. An extension of four additional classrooms is currently being completed.
- The management of pupils is very good. An affirming, productive learning environment has been created. Approaches to the management of pupils are infused by a commitment that each pupil should be known and valued for their own uniqueness.
- In a meeting with members of the parents' association conducted by the inspector as part of the whole-school evaluation and through a questionnaire completed by the general parent-body, strong levels of satisfaction are expressed with the quality of education being provided by the school. However, a significant minority of parents, in their questionnaire responses, reported that they were not certain as to the school's provisions for relationships and sexuality education.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. Organisational policies are clearly outlined and are impacting positively on school-life. Curriculum plans are particularly effective where they document choices made by the school for the implementation of the curriculum in a co-ordinated manner throughout the school.
- An effective approach to school self-evaluation has been adopted. Priority areas for development have been carefully identified, worthwhile action plans have been implemented and this has led to better learning for pupils.
- Teachers' long-term planning is very good. Teachers' short-term planning is good. To develop short-term planning further, teachers are advised to ensure that their planning of learning activities is outlined as clearly identified learning objectives and outcomes. Similarly, differentiation activities for either less-able or more-able pupils should be outlined as clearly identified learning objectives and outcomes. Monthly progress records are maintained with a good amount of detail.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification 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

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá cuspoirí agus struchtúr cinnte ag baint leis na ceachtanna. Baintear úsáid mhaith as acmhainní súl agus modhanna múinte éagsúla chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt agus rannpháirtíocht a chothú. Tá béim fhiúntach curtha ar úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil sa scoil. Tá scileanna éisteachta agus tuisceana na ndaltaí forbartha go breá agus tá úsáid mhaith bainte as rannta agus dánta chun stór cuimsitheach a chur ar eolas ag na daltaí. Tá stór focal agus abairtí cuí leathan ar eolas ag formhór na ndaltaí agus forbraítear é seo go cúramach ó rang go rang. Moltar do na hoidí an scéim ghramadaí atá leagtha amach go soiléir sa phlean scoile a mhúineadh go cúramach agus go cuimsitheach. Léann na daltaí go breá le tuisceant agus líofacht. Tá ag éirí go breá leo freisin sa scríbhneoireacht. Tá na daltaí in ann abairtí a struchturú i gceart agus focail a litríú go réasúnta. Ó thaobh na scríbhneoireachta sna meánranganna agus na hardranganna de, moltar don scoil scéim litriúcháin a leagadh amach bunaithe ar na téamaí sa churaclam, na focail is minice a úsáidtear sa Ghaeilge agus na focail a bhaineann le saolta na ndaltaí féin. B'fhiú don scoil úsáid a bhaint as na próifílí measúnaithe atá ar fáil chun leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn or rang go rang a chur in áirithe.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Lessons have clear objectives and structure. Good use is made of visual resources and active learning methodologies to enhance pupil interest and participation in lessons. A worthwhile emphasis has been placed on using Irish informally throughout the school. Listening and speaking skills are developed well and good use is made of rhymes and poetry to provide pupils with a store of vocabulary which they understand. The majority of pupils have a good store of vocabulary and sentence structure which is developed carefully from class to class. Teachers are advised to ensure that the grammar scheme, which is laid out clearly in the school plan, is taught carefully and comprehensively from class to class. Pupils read well with understanding and fluency. They are progressing well with writing. Pupils are able to structure sentences correctly and spell words to a reasonable level. From the perspective of writing in the middle and senior classes, it is suggested that a spelling scheme be put in place based on the themes in the curriculum, the most frequently used words in Irish and the words that pertain to the pupils' own lives. It would be worthwhile for the school to make use of the pupil profiles that are available to ensure continuity and progression from class to class.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Pupils have good oral language skills with an appropriate range of vocabulary and there are examples of oral language skills being successfully developed through other curriculum areas. Some senior pupils could benefit from the further development of their oral language skills particularly in terms of structuring and sequencing sentences in order to coherently and comprehensively present a main idea accompanied by supporting detail. Attainment levels in reading are very good with all the skills of reading being taught in a systematic manner throughout the school. Developing pupils' independent writing skills has been a priority for development in the last school year. Very worthwhile work has been undertaken in this area and pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the different writing genres. As pupils are introduced to the remaining writing genres and samples of writing are produced, there will be an opportunity for teachers to review what is being achieved at each class level and come to a shared understanding of an expected standard to be achieved at each class level. As pupils master the conventions of spelling, there is scope to encourage pupils

to self-assess their progress and incorporate these findings into more personalised spelling programmes for pupils.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The mathematics curriculum is taught in a broad and balanced manner with lessons being carefully structured and clearly explained. Very good quality learning is assisted by the appropriate use of concrete and visual resources and active-learning methodologies. Pupils have very well-developed computation skills and, in some classes, demonstrate a strong capacity for working collaboratively to engage successfully in problem-solving. A strong emphasis is placed on developing conceptual understanding and this is evident in pupils' understanding of, and facility with, number. Very careful attention is paid to the layout and presentation of pupils' written work. A number of collaborative teaching approaches are being implemented by teachers to support pupils' learning in identified areas of difficulty. This teaching is very effective. In one particular initiative recently begun, making observational notes of pupils' learning and the more explicit consolidation of pupils' learning at the conclusion of each mathematical activity will enhance impact on learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. A variety of sources and resources is used very effectively to create interesting and appropriately challenging lessons for pupils. Pupils engage in these lessons with enthusiasm and demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of what they have learned. An annual science fair and engineering week is organised by the school, involving pupils from two local second level schools, adding much richness to provision for Science. Visits to events of scientific interest and visits in by people connected with the world of Science happen regularly and also contribute to the richness of provision. In terms of curriculum delivery, there is scope for further work in designing and making and for more pupil-generated as opposed to teacher-generated experiments. There is scope too for the school to consider how the process of working scientifically could be delineated at each class level to ensure development in these skills as pupils proceed through the school.
- It is worthy of particular commendation that the school's mission statement envisioning the school as a place of respect, inclusion and meaningful learning is being realised very effectively. The quality of teaching in this school is very good with many teachers demonstrating exemplary practice. Lessons are meaningful, appropriately challenging, well-structured and well-paced. The quality of pupils' learning ranges between good and very good. Pupils are attaining well and enjoy their learning. In a questionnaire completed by the pupils from fourth and sixth class as part of the whole-school evaluation, the majority of pupils express satisfaction with how they are cared for in school. In some few instances, a number of pupils expressed uncertainty regarding their progress in learning. This would be worth discussing with pupils and could be considered for inclusion within the school's on-going development of approaches to pupils' self-assessment of their progress in learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. There is a very strong sense of support teachers and classroom teachers working collaboratively and driven by a commitment to provide pupils with the best possible support for their learning. This child-centred, collaborative approach to support provision is very commendable. Pupils' needs are carefully identified and these are central to the plans that are devised. Teaching activities correlate closely with these plans. Provision in both the withdrawal setting and during in-class support is very effective. The on-going monitoring of pupils' progress during support lessons and the daily refinement of teacher planning to take cognisance of pupils' learning is exemplary. A special class for pupils with specific speech and language disorders is in operation within the school. Lesson planning and delivery in this setting is appropriate for

these pupils and good channels of communication with both the speech and language therapist who supports the work of this class and the parents have been established. Maintaining observational records of how pupils are mastering their priority learning needs will enhance the good quality teaching and learning evident in this setting.

Published February 2014