An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Anthony’s BNS,
Ballinlough, Cork.
Uimhir rolla: 12203G

Date of inspection: 11 November 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Antaine is a school for boys and situated in Ballinlough in Cork City. The school is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. The enrolment stands at 792. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in sixteen mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings. 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

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<th>The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:</th>
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<td>• Exceptional leadership is provided by the principal who maintains a clear oversight of the work of the school.</td>
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<td>• The quality of teaching is generally very good with some excellent practice observed. Staff members are committed to supporting pupils’ learning.</td>
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<td>• Throughout the school pupils achieve high standards in reading and Mathematics.</td>
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<td>• The pupils display positive attitudes and are keen to learn.</td>
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<td>• There are effective arrangements to support all pupils especially those with Special Educational Needs.</td>
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<td>• The school has a strong partnership with parents and carers.</td>
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<th>The following main recommendations are made:</th>
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<td>• The board of management should act to ensure that the length of the school day for infant classes complies with DES policy.</td>
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<td>• Members of the in-school management team should assume more substantial leadership roles in relation to developing curricular areas.</td>
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<td>• Moltar don bhfoireann athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an gclár teagaisc sa Ghaeilge ar mhaithi le breis leanúnachas a chur chun cinn i bhforbairt scileanna na ndaltaí. It is recommended that the programme in place in Irish be reviewed to promote further continuity in the development of pupils’ language skills</td>
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<td>• The organisation of SEN support whereby teachers assume responsibility for aspects of learning should be reviewed and the school’s approach to early intervention in literacy should be extended to provide more in-class support</td>
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3. Quality of School Management

• The board of management’s decision-making procedures are open, transparent and conducted in the best interests of the school community. Whole-school policies are
reviewed regularly and updated. The board actively supports and encourages the professional development of staff. The work of the board of management could be disseminated more widely among the school community through direct communication from the board.

- The board of management has policies and procedures in place to facilitate compliance with relevant legislation and circulars issued by the Department of Education and Skills. However, it is noted that the length of its infant school day falls thirty minutes short of that specified in Circular 11/95 *Time in School*. It is recommended that the board acts to ensure that the length of the school day for infant classes complies with DES policy.

- Aspects of the school’s enrolment policy which relate to the admission of pupils with special educational needs should be reviewed in order to more fully reflect the welcoming and inclusive practice that exists in the school and the good-quality provision that is made for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

- The quality of in-school management is very good. The principal leads and manages the school staff in a very effective manner. He has established a high level of personal credibility in the school community. His leadership is characterised by high professional standards and high expectations for the staff and pupils at all times. The members of the in-school management team have a purposeful range of duties. Duties reflect the changing priorities of the school. The board of management is now encouraged to review in-school management duties on a more formal basis in consultation with the team. In this context, it is recommended that post-holders assume more substantial leadership roles in relation to developing curricular areas.

- The school’s accommodation is well maintained and curricular resources are ample. The school’s secretarial and caretaking staff provides an efficient, courteous service.

- The school has a good range of productive and consistent links with parents. There are flexible arrangements in place for parents to meet with teachers when necessary. Formal parent–teacher meetings are convened as well as Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. The representatives of the Parents’ Association expressed resounding support for the school and the education being provided. In responding to questionnaires, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education being provided.

### 4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. The teachers have prepared a broad range of carefully constructed curricular and organisational policies. To enhance the capacity of the school to engage further in school self-evaluation, it is recommended that the teachers make more effective use of the monthly progress records to inform the review process.

- The quality of classroom planning is very good. Across the school classroom planning is informed by a sense of purpose and commitment to providing the optimal learning experience for each child.

- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular.
5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- A wide range of effective teaching styles is used across the school. Teachers demonstrate a clear focus on improving children’s learning. A wide range of successful teaching methodologies is used with an emphasis on activity based learning. Information and Communication Technology is used extensively to enhance teaching and learning. Emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to participate in a wide range of games and activities and staff members are commended for their work in organising events often outside of school time.

- Pupils are keen to learn and participate willingly in lessons. Some very good examples of successful differentiation were observed in lessons. Sometimes this differentiation should be reflected more clearly in the teacher’s short-term planning.

- Good practice in the teaching and learning of Irish was observed in the school. A very good emphasis is placed on rhyme and poetry in the junior classes. At particular class levels, a communicative approach is implemented effectively and the pupils demonstrate significant progress. Pupils read with accuracy and they discuss the lesson topics with confidence in the majority of classes. It is recommended that the programme in place be reviewed to promote further continuity in the development of pupils’ language skills. It is also recommended that a wider variety of reading texts be provided to pupils.

- In English, the quality of the teaching is praiseworthy. The development of oral skills is supported in a focused way and lessons observed are characterised by enthusiastic oral interaction. Pupils show interest in reading and very good use is made of libraries and class novels. The successful teaching of reading is reflected in the impressive test scores attained in standardised tests. Phonological awareness is well developed beginning in infants’ classes. From First Class upwards, some in-class support and substantial individual support outside the classroom is provided by a committed and enthusiastic special education team. Parents’ support is encouraged through the school’s CAPER programme. Overall the standard in writing is creditable. Teachers scaffold the writing process and pupils’ work in the various areas of the curriculum is carefully monitored by teachers. Samples of pupils’ written work are maintained and displayed including word-processed work.

- The teaching of Mathematics is of high-quality and many examples of excellent teaching were observed during the evaluation. A range of highly successful methodologies was used during observed lessons. The whole school approach which is adopted in relation to Mathematical language could be extended to other areas of the work. The quality of pupils’ learning in Mathematics is very good. This is reflected in the performance of pupils in standardised tests and in the consistently high levels of achievement in Mathematics that exist all through the school.
In planning for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) priority is given to pupils' personal development through providing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, show initiative, and to become aware of their part in the wider community. In their daily interactions with adults and with classmates, pupils present as being self-confident, considerate and tolerant of each other. In discrete SPHE time, across the curriculum subjects, and in daily school life, teachers ensure that pupils encounter a range of relevant topics and experiences. A wide range of successful methodologies is used during stimulating lessons to help pupils develop a positive self-. They are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility towards those less well-off in the local community and beyond. Many cross curricular experiences are provided including Drama and Visual arts.

Teachers have effective practices to identify how well pupils are making progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. A wide range of assessments are used in including suitable standardised, diagnostic and criterion-reference tests and checklists.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The policy for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has been carefully developed. The policy establishes communication structures and incorporates a staged approach with class teachers assuming first-line responsibility for all pupils learning and this was very much in evidence. Learning support teachers and resource teachers address particular areas of learner’s difficulties in a professional manner. Instruction is well organised, tasks are analysed into small steps and support is provided sensitively with good use of resources. Some staff members have availed of additional training relating to Special Educational Needs.

- Individual Education Plans for pupils are carefully constructed for the most part with an appropriate level of parental involvement. Pupils’ strengths and learning needs are identified, and priority learning needs are chosen for a specific period. While many learning targets relate to specific learning objectives, some are too general or not fully developed. The support provided by Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) is valuable and makes a significant contribution to the pupils’ learning. SNAs and class teachers work collaboratively and a variety of practices support the inclusion of pupils with SEN such as Buddy Systems, Circle Time, and Reverse Inclusion to a lesser extent.

- Some innovative, collaborative practice has evolved in the school with the support of external therapists, particularly in the way the staff addresses the children's needs in regard to social and physical development. The school's approach to early intervention should be developed to provide more in-class support and more 'reverse inclusion'. Some individual pupils receive support from a number of teachers. This arrangement can pose challenges in relation to organising timetable and ensuring that pupils access all curriculum areas. This policy should now be reviewed and alternative models be examined which would make for less multifaceted delivery of support.

- The school authorities support necessitous pupils if necessary through the careful and sensitive management of resources such as the school rental scheme. Whenever newcomer children come from homes where English is not the first language the special education teachers respond as the need arises.

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