1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Eoin is a five-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are 108 pupils enrolled and attendance is very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:

- Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Eoin is characterised by its strong sense of community and its positive and welcoming environment.
- The board of management and parents’ council are strongly committed to supporting the work of the school.
- The principal and teaching staff demonstrate high levels of dedication to the welfare and learning of the pupils.
- The pupils are motivated and participate eagerly in the range of learning activities.
- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management address teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters on a regular basis.
- The curriculum leadership role of the in-school management team should be developed further.
- Whole-school plans for individual subject areas should be updated to guide curriculum implementation at classroom level and an action-planning approach adopted to address identified priorities.
- The teaching and learning approaches in use in Irish lessons should be reviewed to ensure the incremental development of the pupils’ oral language competence.
- A broad and balanced history programme should be implemented and greater attention afforded to the study of the history of the locality.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is strongly committed to supporting the work of the school. In particular, its role in the improvement of the school building and facilities is praised. As a means of further developing its role, it is recommended that the board address teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters on a regular basis.
• The principal is successful in cultivating a positive school climate characterised by productive working relationships. All members of the in-school management team fulfill their duties competently and their work contributes significantly to the effective operation of the school. In order to maximise the team’s input to the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement, it is recommended that its curriculum leadership role be developed further.

• The physical school environment is well maintained and all classrooms provide attractive learning environments. While a good range of teaching and learning resources is employed skilfully to aid the pupils’ learning, the more judicious use of textbooks and workbooks in some curriculum areas is advised. The school has expanded its ICT resources significantly and the increasing purposeful use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is in evidence.

• The school is strongly characterised by its open and welcoming atmosphere. Relations and communications with parents and the wider school community are managed effectively. The recently established parents’ council contributes substantially to the work of the school and the range of activities provided. The responses to the parent questionnaires indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the school.

• Positive relations between the school staff, the pupils and their peers are strongly in evidence. Overall, the pupils are well behaved and engage enthusiastically in their learning. In the pupil questionnaires, most pupils report that they like coming to school and that they get on well with the other children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• A detailed school plan has been devised collaboratively by the principal and teaching staff, in consultation with the board of management. While the overall quality of organisational planning is good, the plans for individual subject areas should be revised to reflect the particular circumstances of the school and detail clearly the manner in which subject-specific methodologies and approaches are to be implemented. The identification of a number of curriculum priorities for the current school year is lauded. It is recommended that an action-planning approach be implemented to ensure that such priorities are addressed adequately. The school is advised to facilitate parental involvement in the development of pertinent policy areas.

• Mainstream teacher planning and recording of progress is of a suitable standard. In order to assess the effectiveness of curriculum implementation at a schoolwide level and to ensure continuity and progression in learning, the periodic review of monthly progress reports is advised.

Child protection policy and procedures

A detailed child protection policy and procedures were drafted in 2006 and subsequently reviewed. However, at the time of the evaluation, the board of management had not formally adopted the Department’s Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006. The board of management should ensure that the aforementioned guidelines are formally adopted. Evidence was provided to show that the 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. The teachers draw on a range of suitable teaching approaches that respond appropriately to the pupils’ needs and interests. The pupils display a keen interest in the learning activities provided and in the pupil questionnaires, most pupils report that they find their lessons interesting. In implementing lessons, the more regular use of collaborative learning approaches would be beneficial. The pupils’ work is monitored closely and constructive feedback is provided. The teachers are commended for the increasing range of assessment modes in use to monitor individual pupil progress. It is recommended that the outcomes of annual standardised assessment in English and Mathematics be analysed systematically and that the outcomes be used to inform increased levels of differentiation.

- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán oiriúnach. Cuireann na h-oidí an t-ábhar foghlama i láthair go spreagúil agus éirionn le formhór na ndaltaí iad féin a chur in iúl ar leibhéal sásúil. Bunaítear an obair den chuid is mó ar ábhar na dtéacsleabhar. Chun a chintiúi go bhfuil forbairt ar an bhfoghlaim ó rang go rang, moltar ionichruth a bhunú go céimníuil ar ábhar a múineadh cheana. I bhformhór na ranganna, aithrisíonn na daltaí raon, dánta agus amhráin go muiníneach. Léann cuid mhaithe daltaí taeasanna simplí le cruinneas agus le liofacht inmholt. Moltar ábhair léitheoireachta breise agus fíor leabhair Ghaeilge a úsáid sna ranganna éagsúla. Cleachtar scribhneoireachta fheidhmíuil d'fhéadfadh don chuid is mó ach tá túis breá curtha le scileanna scribhneoireachta néamhspleach na ndaltaí a fhhorbairt.

Overall, teaching and learning in Irish is of an appropriate standard. Lesson content is implemented in a stimulating manner and a majority of the pupils succeed in expressing themselves satisfactorily. Lesson content is based primarily on the textbooks in use. To ensure progression in learning from class to class, it is recommended that the language being taught build incrementally from previous learning. In a majority of classes, the pupils recite rhymes, poetry and song confidently. A significant number of the pupils read simple texts with praiseworthy accuracy and fluency. The use of a greater range of reading material and real books in Irish is advised. The pupils practise mostly functional writing but a good start is being made in the development of the pupils’ independent writing skills.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high standard. Most pupils express their views and engage with the opinions of their peers confidently and competently. In order to maximise the development of the pupils’ listening and speaking competence, the teachers are advised to ensure that the breadth of primary curriculum oral language objectives is addressed consistently. Very good reading standards are being achieved through the school and most pupils report that they are doing well at reading. It is recommended that the range of approaches to reading currently in use be expanded further. Good progress is in evidence in the development of the pupils’ writing skills. In particular, efforts to foster their personal writing competence through exposure to a range of genres are commended.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. New concepts are introduced expertly through well-structured talk and discussion, skilful teacher questioning and the effective use of available resources. These approaches are complemented by the purposeful use of ICT, the environment and mathematical games. The provision of more regular opportunities for the pupils to consolidate their understanding through engagement in real-life, problem-solving tasks would be beneficial. In the main, pupil achievement levels are very good and most pupils report that they are achieving well in Mathematics.
• Much good work is in evidence in the teaching and learning of History. Some well-devised opportunities for the pupils to work as historians are provided through the use of story, oral and photographic evidence, artefacts and project activity. The pupils display a laudable understanding and appreciation of the topics under investigation. In order to ensure the implementation of a broad and balanced history programme, it is recommended that the strand units to be explored annually be selected on a whole-school basis, that topic content be investigated consistently at an indepth level and that greater attention be afforded to the study of the history of the locality.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a good quality. Individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) are prepared for each pupil following close consultation with class teachers and parents. It is recommended that, in all instances, IPLP targets are sufficiently specific in nature, are used to determine lesson activities and serve as a baseline for the comprehensive assessment of individual pupils’ ongoing achievement of their learning goals. Lesson provision, which is made available on a withdrawal and an in-class basis, addresses the pupils’ literacy and numeracy needs competently. High levels of pupil interest and good pupil progress are in evidence. The school is advised to ensure that the continuum of support for pupils with additional learning needs is implemented fully, including the utilisation of classroom support plans.
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 the school would like to thank the Inspector for her courtesy, encouragement and advice throughout the W.S.E. All partners in education found the experience to be informative and positive.

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

- Since the inspection, greater attention has been afforded to the study of history of the locality.
- The Child Protection Policy was formally adopted at a Board of Management meeting dated 24/01/2011.
- The curriculum leadership role of the in-school management team is being reviewed.
- From now on, the Principal will present a Principal’s Report at each Board of Management meeting.
- The Board of Management will issue an annual newsletter.