Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Treasa Naofa, Kilflynn,
Tralee, Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla: 15033W

Date of inspection: 11 February 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION
A whole-school evaluation of Scoil Naomh Treasa was undertaken in February 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Geography. The board of management of the school 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND
Scoil Naomh Treasa is a four-teacher, mainstream, co-educational school situated on the outskirts of the village of Kilflynn. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. Enrolment has remained stable over the last five years. Pupil attendance is of a very high standard.

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pupils enrolled in the school</td>
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<td>Mainstream classes in the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers on the school staff</td>
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<td>Mainstream class teachers</td>
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<td>Teachers working in support roles</td>
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<td>Special needs assistants</td>
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1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision
The school’s mission statement indicates that it seeks to promote “the full intellectual development of every child in our care, while fully respecting all individual, cultural, ethnic or religious differences” and to “value our close relationship with parents and the local community”. Presently, a copy of the school’s mission statement is contained in the whole-school plan. The board of management might consider how best to communicate the school’s mission statement to the parents of pupils enrolled in the school.

1.2 Board of management
The board of management provides strong and effective leadership to the school. Meetings of the board are convened regularly, minutes of meetings are recorded and finances are certified annually. A major building programme was completed in 2005 and the quality of school accommodation is now of a very suitable standard. School policies and plans are discussed at board meetings prior to ratification. The majority of these are signed and dated by the chairperson. These good practices are highly commended. It is now recommended that the board draft a strategic plan in which targets for the development of curricular, organisational and resource matters are prioritised over a three to five year period in consultation with the wider school community as appropriate. It is further recommended that a section of the board meetings be devoted to discussion of the educational provision made for the pupils by the school.
1.3 In-school management
The in-school management team comprises a principal, a deputy principal and a special duties post holder. The leadership demonstrated by the principal is characterised by close familiarity with the local community, good interpersonal skills and good working relationships with colleagues, the board of management and with pupils and their parents. He is highly organised and his management of the day-to-day functioning of the school is very effective. A wide range of duties have been assigned to the recently appointed deputy principal and special duties post holder. These duties are very effectively discharged and it is evident that together the team makes a significant contribution to the effective organisation of the school. The good practice whereby the staff meets on a weekly basis to discuss school related issues is highly commended. It is now recommended that an increased focus be placed on the curriculum leadership role of the in-school management team thereby enabling them to place increased emphasis on monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and its impact on pupil attainment.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community
The school has established very effective relationships with the wider school community and members of the community are regularly invited to share their expertise and experiences with the pupils in the school. This good practice is highly praised. Annual parent teacher meetings are convened and end-of-year pupil progress reports are issued to parents of all pupils. Parents of pupils enrolling into the infant classes are given a very helpful booklet outlining what they can expect their children to experience at school. Parents value the work of the school and parent representatives report that they are pleased with the educational provision in the school particularly with the broad curriculum which is provided and with pupil attainment. They feel welcome to meet with the principal and with other members of the staff informally to discuss the progress of their children. Parent representatives report that their views are sought when the school review aspects of its organisational policies. This good practice might now be extended to include the increased involvement of parents in supporting the work of the school.

1.5 Management of pupils
The school manages pupils’ behaviour very effectively. Parents have been involved in the formulation of the code of behaviour and this code is implemented fairly and consistently throughout the school. The pupils are considerate and well behaved. They display an interest in their work and they co-operate willingly with their teachers during all class activities. The school has recently embarked on a project to obtain Green School Flag status. A representative and committed committee of pupils has been elected to discuss and make decisions relating to this project. The age of some of the pupils enrolled in the school is however a cause of concern. It is therefore recommended that the board abide by the guidelines outlined in circular 11/01 when applications for enrolment are received and that all pupils are placed in age-appropriate settings.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning
The whole-school plan is presented in two lever arch folders. A comprehensive range of organisational policies has been ratified by the board and these are of a very high standard. It is recommended however that the board arrange for the drafting of a Relationship and Sexuality Policy (RSE) in consultation with parents as a matter of priority. Curriculum plans in all eleven subject areas have been drafted and these are of a good to very good quality. It is now recommended that future reviews of curriculum plans focus on the monitoring of the impact of these plans on pupil learning. It is further recommended that the board consider how the role of parents, as outlined in many of the plans, might be more effectively communicated to the parent body.
Teachers’ individual preparation is of a good standard with some examples of very high quality long and short term planning. Where this exemplary practice was observed, teachers plan for the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum using specific curriculum objectives and outlining very appropriate learning activities which support pupil learning. It is recommended that this very good practice be shared among the staff as a whole.

2.2 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 Language

Irish

Irish is taught very effectively in this school. During the communicative phase tasks and social interaction are organised to allow pupils the opportunity to practise the language they have learned with each other in authentic communicative situations. This good practice is highly praised. Use is made of a range of methodologies to effectively present content. The pupils speak Irish naturally displaying a wealth of vocabulary, accuracy and richness of language in suitable contexts. Irish is used as the management language throughout the Irish lessons and it is now recommended, as is the case in the junior and middle standards, that more widespread use is made of Irish in the daily activities and lessons of the classroom. Skilled use is made of a range of teaching methodologies to develop and consolidate reading skills. The pupils read accurately and...
confidently and they employ a range of skills to identify, read and understand words, phrases and sentences. It is now recommended that a wider range of reading materials and real books be used in the senior classes to further develop the pupils' listening and reading skills. A high standard is displayed in the written work of the pupils. Writing skills are systematically taught in the school. The pupils, especially in the junior and middle standards, are given regular opportunities to write and to create a wide range of texts involving creative and formal writing.

English
The quality of teaching and learning in English is of a good to very good standard. However there is scope for development in the quality of learning outcomes of the pupils’ oral language skills with standards of achievement falling short of expectations in some instances. Throughout the school, pupils have developed good listening skills and teacher questioning and class discussions are skilfully managed. However, insufficient opportunities are provided to pupils to enable them to use language creatively, to develop receptive language skills and to develop their cognitive abilities through pupil talk and discussion. An increased emphasis should be placed on enabling pupils to explore and develop ideas and concepts in pairs and small groups, to justify and defend personal opinions and to present coherent arguments orally. It is therefore recommended that in reviewing current provision, consideration be given to the teaching of specific and selected oral language objectives in discrete oral language lessons throughout the school. A wider range of active learning opportunities, which encourage and facilitate the use of the language acquired by the pupils, might also be outlined at each class level.

Formal reading is very competently taught at each class level and the majority of pupils have attained very good standards in English reading. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of phonological awareness, the use of onset and rime as a methodology and on the construction of a print-rich environment. Pupils’ sight vocabulary is systematically developed and care is taken to encourage pupils to read for pleasure and information. Basic information retrieval skills are well taught and the use of dictionaries is encouraged. In order to further develop this good work, consideration might now be given to the provision of increased opportunities for pupils to respond to different genres of texts and to share their thoughts and opinions with other pupils. The increased use of experiential and collaborative reading opportunities in the infant classes should also be considered. This should further develop the pupils’ receptiveness to language and their cognitive, emotional and imaginative responses to literature.

Handwriting is very well taught throughout the school and the quality of the pupils’ written presentations is of a very high standard. This work reflects their understanding of the conventions of print, sentence structure and spelling rules and strategies. In the junior and middle classes pupils are provided with the opportunity to write in a wide range of genres and for varied audiences. In the senior classes pupil experience interesting and relevant writing challenges and engage in the writing of personal essays. These good practices are praised. To further this good practice it is recommended that the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) feature more regularly in pupils’ collaborative and personal writing assignments.

3.2 Mathematics
A wide range of effective teaching approaches is used in Mathematics and pupils at all levels demonstrate very good standards of attainment in each of the six strands of the curriculum. When questioned they displayed an ability to apply mathematical concepts to a range of everyday situations and problems. A balanced approach to the development of mathematical understanding is evident and areas such as shape and space and measures are taught effectively with appropriate use of concrete equipment including games, charts, number lines and measuring tools. During the evaluation period effective learning experiences, which allowed for guided discovery and activity
methods, were provided in the junior classes and ICT was skilfully utilised in the infant classes to develop pupils’ understanding of shape. The pupils’ concept of time was very well developed in the middle standards using the real life experiences of the pupils. In the senior classes pupils were observed to represent data which they had collated using bar, pie and trend graphs and the activities organised placed due emphasis on the development of their problem-solving skills. These good practices are highly commended. It is now recommended that teachers, in their long term schemes of work, plan to address each strand of the Mathematics curriculum on a termly basis thereby scaffolding pupils’ previous learning and further developing their understanding of the concepts addressed.

3.3 Geography
The teaching and learning of Geography are of a high standard. Very attractive displays relating to Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) feature in each classroom and these support the integrated nature of this area of the curriculum. A range of methods is used to enable the pupils to become familiar with natural and human features in Ireland and in other countries. Aspects of the lives of people in other countries and their environments are studied in the middle and senior classes and some examples of good project work are displayed in these classrooms. Graphicacy skills are very comprehensively taught at all levels and pupils are facilitated to interact frequently with maps, atlases, globes and ordinance survey maps. It is evident that all pupils have developed a good sense of place and of space. Bird tables, a school garden, visits to a neighbouring garden and walks around the locality feature in the curriculum delivered. It is recommended that this good practice, whereby the immediate and local environment is utilised as a springboard for pupil learning be even further developed and that a range of field trips, appropriate to the age of the pupils be organised each year. It is further recommended that the pupils be encouraged to record their learning in Geography on a more regular basis and that diagrams, illustrations, concept mapping and the drawing of maps feature in this work.

3.4 Assessment
Individual teachers utilise a range of assessment modes to monitor pupils’ progress and many examples of good practice were observed during the evaluation period. These include standardised tests in literacy and numeracy, some records of teacher observations, checklists of sight vocabulary known to the pupils, lists of books read and samples of work completed by the pupils and results of teacher designed tests and tasks administered during the school year. In the infant classes checklists for phonological awareness and for the identification of core words are maintained. In the senior classes tests are administered on a termly basis to assess pupil progress in a range of curriculum areas. The systematic correction of pupils’ written work is a feature of all classroom practice. The results of standardised and diagnostic tests are effectively utilised for the purpose of measuring and monitoring the pupils’ attainment and for identifying those pupils who are experiencing difficulties. It is now recommended that teachers consult the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) guidelines Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum- Guidelines for Schools when reviewing current provision in assessment. This should ensure that a systematic means of assessing pupil progress is devised across the curriculum areas and that assessment data are effectively utilised to enrich the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs
The school is commended for the manner in which it supports pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are well integrated into the daily life of the school and within the classroom
context. A part-time resource teacher and a shared learning-support teacher provide support to pupils with identified learning difficulties. Using available assessment data, and in consultation with class teachers, comprehensive individual educational plans (IEPs) are devised in which specific targets and activities are identified to meet the priority learning needs of the pupils. Teachers are praised for keeping good records of pupil attainment in relation to these targets. During the evaluation period the quality of the teaching observed was of a very good standard. It is evident that appropriate pupil-teacher relationships have been established and that the pupils are making very good progress in their learning commensurate with their abilities. It is however recommended that current provision for pupils with learning support be reviewed. Serious consideration should be given in this review to afford parents a more significant role in the devising of IEPs and in the assessing of pupil progress at the end of each instructional term. The present selection criteria for the provision of support to pupils in the middle and senior classes should also be examined and an increased focus should be placed on the provision of early intervention initiatives in the infant and junior classes. It is further recommended that the present accommodation for pupils in receipt of support be improved.

4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups
The school’s enrolment policy and mission statement are supportive of the inclusion of pupils from disadvantaged, minority and other groups. All pupils are assured of equality of access and participation in all areas of the curriculum and school life. The positive school climate facilitates this inclusion to a great extent and the school is to be commended in this regard.

5. Conclusion
The school has strengths in the following areas:

- The school benefits from a favourable school climate which is characterised by a warm positive ethos and by a deep interest in the welfare of all pupils.
- The whole-school plan is of a good standard and it is evident that the plans and policies devised are reflective of the school’s context.
- The board of management, parent body and wider school community are very supportive of the school.
- In general, the school building and its grounds are suited to purpose and are very well maintained.
- The quality of teaching and learning is of a good to very good standard with a significant majority of pupils attaining very high standards in Gaeilge, Mathematics and English.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is very well utilised as a teaching and learning tool.

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

- It is recommended that in reviewing current provision, consideration be given to the teaching of specific and selected oral language objectives in discrete oral language lessons throughout the school.
- It is recommended that the board abide by the guidelines outlined in circular 11/01 when applications for enrolment are received and that all pupils are placed in age-appropriate settings.
• It is recommended that the board arrange for the drafting of a Relationship and Sexuality Policy (RSE) in consultation with parents as a matter of priority.
• It is recommended that teachers consult the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) guidelines *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum- Guidelines for Schools* when reviewing the current assessment policy.

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.
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 would like to thank the inspector for the extremely professional and courteous manner in which she conducted the Whole School Evaluation. The Board accepts the conclusions of the report and the key recommendations which will form the basis for further school development planning.

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

An R.S.E. committee, comprised of two Board of Management members, two Parent Association members and two teachers, met on June 10th 2010. That committee discussed and approved a draft R.S.E. policy which was ratified by the Board of Management on 21st June 2010.