An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naisiúnta Shéamuis Naofa
Barnacogue, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 15113U

Date of inspection: 23 November 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naisiúnta Shéamuis Naofa is a small, rural, co-educational school located in the parish of Charlestown. Enrolment in the school is falling, reflecting the demographics of the local area. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Achonry.

This whole-school evaluation focuses on the quality of teaching and learning in Irish, English, Mathematics and Science. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The school has a very diligent teaching staff led by a competent, capable principal and supported by a hardworking board of management.
- The quality of school resources is very good. Information and communication technology is integrated very effectively into all areas of school life.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil outcomes in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Science is of a very high standard.
- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is commendable. There is clear evidence of ongoing school improvement.
- The quality of teacher planning is highly praiseworthy.
- The quality of supports for pupils is very good. Effective assessment, planning and teaching ensure consistent progress for individual pupils.
- The school’s approach to infant education is particularly commendable as it promotes the Aistear curriculum which emphasises learning through play.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that in-class support be introduced in the school to assist with the development of specific differentiated literacy activities.
- Teachers should consider devising a range of checklists and assessment rubrics to support learning in all subject areas.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Clear roles and responsibilities have been assigned to different board members. School accounts are audited annually. The school is maintained to the highest standard. It has undergone significant development in recent years, including an extension to, and refurbishment of, the building. The board is very supportive of the work of the school.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal is a very competent, capable leader who promotes best practice in all areas of school life. She displays highly effective organisational, management and planning skills. The in-school management team works very successfully towards a shared vision, for the benefit of all pupils.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school is very well resourced. The development of a school library is laudable and supports pupils’ interest in books. The school has also created a garden as part of the Green-Schools Programme and has planted over 700 trees in the school grounds. The local environment is used to very good effect as a basis for lessons across different curricular areas.

- The quality of home-school communication is very good. Parents are issued with end-of-year reports on their children’s progress. They are also invited to annual parent-teacher meetings. The school has actively promoted parental and community involvement in recent years through Maths for Fun and Literacy for Fun initiatives, through the Green-Schools Programme and through the celebration of Grandparents’ Day. In a questionnaire issued to the parent body as part of the evaluation, all parents agree that the school is well run and indicate that they are happy with the school.

- The quality of pupil management is very good. The school has a very welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Pupils are clearly valued and a number of initiatives have been established to promote citizenship and responsibility in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is commendable. A very effective system of planning is in place, based on established targets over a three-year period. There is clear evidence of school improvement in the areas of curriculum, organisation and resources. The staff has produced a variety of plans and policies which reflect the school’s context and practices.

- The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation is very good. Curricular plans inform classroom planning. There is a need to review aspects of curricular plans more frequently to reflect new developments and current initiatives undertaken by the staff.

- The quality of teacher planning is highly praiseworthy. Teachers have clear, objective-based long-term and short-term plans which show clear links to the school plan. Such plans present relevant and realistic approaches to differentiation based on the staged approach of Special Education Circular SP ED 02/05.

- 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

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. A very effective blend of methodologies and resources is used at all times. Pupils’ literacy skills and language skills are developed across the curriculum. Teachers integrate subjects skilfully to provide engaging and holistic experiences for their pupils. The school’s approach to infant education is particularly commendable as it promotes the Aistear curriculum which emphasises learning through play.

- Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go han-mhaith. Baintear feidhm inmholta as rannta, dán ta agus amhráin i rith an lae chun na daltaí a spreagadh. Tá dearadh flor-dhearachcumhacht chaith chun cinn ag na múinteoirí i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. I rith na measúnaithe, bhí na daltaí sinsearacha in ann caint go leanúnach faoi théamaí éagsúla agus in aímsirí difriúla. Bhí caighdeán na léitheoireachta go han-mhaith. Forbraítear scileanna léitheoireachta triús a bhaint as leabhair mhóra agus as leabhair Gaeilge. Úsáidtear an Drámaíocht agus na hAmharcealíona chun tuiscint a thaghadh. Pupils from first class upwards, write their own books to practise new vocabulary.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Discrete oral-language lessons are taught by both teachers. Pupils recite poetry with enthusiasm and expression. Stories are used advantageously as a springboard for written activities. Pupils engage in the writing process on a regular basis. Their work is displayed attractively around the school. Teachers have succeeded in promoting a culture of reading in the school and place an exemplary emphasis on the reading of novels. They should now consider the introduction of grouping pupils by ability for some literacy activities to maximise individual pupil outcomes.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The language of Mathematics is promoted at all times. Early-mathematical skills are developed very appropriately through play. Class teachers implement whole-school approaches to the teaching of number facts and problem-solving. A very positive attitude to Mathematics is established through the Maths for Fun initiative with parents, through mathematical trails around the school grounds, and through pupils designing and making their own board games.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. New concepts are linked to pupils’ experiences. A wide range of resources is used in the teaching of Science. Technology is used to excellent effect. Teachers promote discovery learning and encourage the pupils to experiment, predict and hypothesise. Teachers place a very effective emphasis on the local environment and have developed the school grounds to maximise pupils’ awareness and care of the natural environment.

- The quality of assessment is very good. Pupils are assessed through a variety of teacher-designed tests and tasks and through standardised tests in literacy and Mathematics. The results of standardised tests are graphed and the staff has devised strategies for the ongoing development of literacy and numeracy. Considering the school’s success in this area, it is recommended that a range of checklists and assessment rubrics be devised for all subject areas.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school has the services of a learning-support/resource teacher (LS/RT) who is shared with one other school. The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with different needs is very good. A holistic approach to pupils’ needs is promoted at all times and the staff emphasises pupils’ strengths, abilities and interests. A variety of diagnostic and screening tests is used in the support setting. Teacher planning is clear and concise and shows continuity and progression from week to week.

- The quality of outcomes and progression of pupils with different needs is very good. Individual pupils have made consistent progress and the school ensures ongoing monitoring of pupils who attend the LS/RT. Support is discontinued once pupil progress is sufficient. Class teachers monitor such pupils carefully to ensure their progress is sustained. Considering the fact that few pupils need intensive support, it is recommended that the school explores the possibilities of in-class support.

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Appendix

School Response to the Report

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

Board of Management and Staff at Scoil Naisiúnta Shéamuis Naofa are very pleased with this affirming report. We would like to acknowledge the professional manner in which the evaluation process was carried out.

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 the B.O.M. and staff have acted on the recommendations made in the report.