Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Feichín,
Termonfeckin, County Louth
Uimhir rolla: 16208N

Date of inspection: 25 January 2011
1. INTRODUCTION

Scoil Naomh Feichín is a fourteen-teacher co-educational vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Diocese of Armagh. Good standards of teaching and learning are in evidence in this well run school. There are 288 pupils enrolled in the school: their attendance levels are very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- All procedures and protocols in the school are of a very high order; the role of the board is acknowledged in this achievement.
- Leadership is strong and curriculum-focused.
- Overall standards of teaching are high in all curriculum areas evaluated.
- A laudable standard of oral Irish is noted.
- Learning outcomes in English and Mathematics were good in lessons observed.
- Teaching of Drama is of a high standard
- Special education provision is of a high standard

The following main recommendations are made:

- Additional differentiation of work is required.
- Problem solving in Mathematics should be extended.
- Further analysis of standardised test results is required and a system should be devised for presenting these results to indicate pupils’ progress from year to year.
- Curriculum areas should be assigned to and led by the in-school management team.
3 Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted correctly and carries out its duties with due regard to the required procedures and protocols of the Education Act. The board participates effectively in the school development planning process. There are clear and effective channels of communication between the board and teachers and parents. The board is anxious to improve safety features of the road adjacent to the school.

- The principal displays a clear sense of purpose with regard to the school’s development. His leadership is strong and curriculum-focused. He places the learning of pupils at the centre of his work and he has been very effective in creating a collegial working environment for all members of staff.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good, with clearly delineated tasks specified for each post-holder. To enhance the impact of this work on pupils’ learning, duties for all in-school management personnel should include curriculum leadership.

- Interactions between pupils and staff are respectful and positive: the majority of pupil respondents to a questionnaire issued during this inspection state that pupils get on very well together in this school.

4 Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Well devised organisational policies are successful in contributing to the efficient and effective management of the school.

- The quality of curriculum planning is very good. Curriculum plans specify content to be taught and skills to be acquired for all class levels and also outline appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies.

- The school’s engagement with the development planning process will be enhanced by a greater emphasis on self-evaluation in order to identify priority areas for development. The school also needs to adopt a more formalised approach to action planning in order to address these priorities.

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department’s Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools. Evidence was provided to show 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.
5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The standard of teaching and learning in English is very good. Pupils have good oral language abilities in English. The teaching of reading and writing is systematic and many pupils are fluent readers and writers. Additional differentiation should now take place to take account of varying pupil ability levels. The responses of pupils in standardised tests should be further analysed to identify aspects of literacy processes requiring development and subsequent provision should address these areas on both a class and an individual pupil basis.

- The standard of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. The teaching of Mathematics places an appropriate emphasis on discussion, visual resources, the manipulation of concrete materials and the relating of mathematical concepts to pupils’ life experience. Insufficient differentiation and problem solving work is a feature, however, of some teaching; this area needs to be further developed so as to improve the mathematical attainments of some pupils.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is very good. Planning for Drama at whole school level is comprehensive and embraces all key elements of the drama curriculum. Lessons observed were of a very good standard, demonstrated use of relevant drama techniques, including, in particular, thought tracking and fostered imaginative interaction.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in this school is good. Lessons are pitched at an appropriate level, paced effectively and teacher questioning is successful in developing and consolidating pupils’ understanding. Pupils are attaining a good standard in Irish, English, Mathematics and a very high standard in Drama.

- A good standard of teaching and learning of Irish is evident. Communicative methods are in use and pupils have achieved a high standard in oral Irish. In general, pupils are able to answer questions satisfactorily, using vocabulary learnt during lessons, but a richer language input could be taught in some of the classes. Pupils in middle and senior classes read correctly and the majority have good understanding of the reading content. It is recommended that a wider range of reading material be used and learning could be based around specific themes. The teaching of poetry is to be commended in each class. Writing is well taught, but creative writing needs to be extended.

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Questionnaire responses record that all pupils find their lessons interesting and that they think that Scoil Naomh Feichín is a good school.

6. Quality of support for pupils

- Special education provision is very effective. There is evidence of appropriate provision and planning for pupils with SEN in the mainstream classes. An individual profile and learning plan (IPLP) for each child has been drawn up. These IPLPs are of a high standard and were devised following consideration of the recommendations from psychologists and other professionals and also following consultation with each child’s parents. Some very good teaching strategies were observed in this area.

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