An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Fiachra
Clontubrid, County Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 16865D

Date of inspection: 15 September 2010
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Fiachra is a three-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. There are sixty-seven pupils enrolled and pupil attendance is very good. Cognisant of its rural location and physical isolation, the school has embraced an e-learning culture, including its participation in the Microsoft Pathfinder Schools’ Initiative and in the Empowering Minds project. 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:

- The board of management, parents and members of the wider school community contribute effectively to a range of school initiatives.
- The quality of school self-evaluation and development planning is very good.
- The principal demonstrates excellent curriculum leadership. The teaching staff implements a range of progressive approaches to teaching and learning.
- The pupils are active and innovative agents in their learning. Pupil achievement levels are very good.
- Teaching and learning in Science is excellent.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very successfully to support teaching and learning.

The following main recommendation is made:

- It is advised that Irish poetry be taught consistently in all classes.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets regularly and discharges its duties in a professional and conscientious manner. It actively supports curriculum and organisational initiatives that improve the quality of provision for pupils. The board communicates effectively with the wider school community. The chairperson is praised for his high level of commitment to the work of the school.

- The principal is commended highly for his capacity to lead and manage the school. In cooperation with the deputy principal, he is particularly successful in creating an innovative learning environment. The work of the in-school management team enhances the quality of teaching and learning significantly.

- The school building and grounds are maintained to an excellent standard. The school has a wide range of teaching resources, most notably in the area of information and communication technology (ICT). These resources are used consistently and effectively to support the pupils’ learning.
• Parents and members of the wider school community are facilitated to play an active and meaningful role in the work of the school. As a consequence, the school operates as an authentic learning community. Parents are provided with regular and accurate information regarding their children’s progress. The pending introduction of a virtual learning environment, through which parents will have on-line access to aspects of their children’s learning, is praised highly. The parents’ association is very committed to supporting the work of the school and it successfully promotes the involvement of the wider parent community.

• The pupils’ behaviour is very good. They present as confident and self-assured children. The teaching staff is commended for its capacity to respond sensitively to the pastoral care needs of the pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of school self-evaluation and development planning is very good. Collaborative whole-school planning, involving all the education partners, is well established. Curriculum plans and organisational policies are reviewed formally on a cyclical basis. The school is praised for the manner in which it progresses areas that have been identified for development.

• Classroom planning is of a high standard. The teachers use the school plan productively when planning for their individual class settings. As a consequence, progression in the pupils’ learning from class to class is strongly in evidence.

Child protection policy and procedures

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 quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. The teachers successfully promote a process of inquiry among the pupils. They adapt and extend their teaching approaches to provide suitable learning challenges for all pupils. The pupils in turn establish personal and shared learning goals and reflect formally on their achievements, most notably in Mathematics and Science. The pupils are active and innovative agents in their learning. They are encouraged to interpret information critically and to express themselves in multi-media forms. The progress of individual pupils is tracked systematically through the school and includes the use of innovative approaches to pupil self-assessment. The analysis of attainment has resulted in the implementation of high quality interventions that respond to the learning needs of all pupils, including lower and higher achieving pupils.

• Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta agus na foghlamaí sa Ghaeilge go maith. Tá cumas labhartha na ndaltaí le moladh agus éiríonn le formhór diobh páirt a glacadh i gcumarsáid shimplí. Aithrisíonn na daltaí raidió agus dánta go hanamúil i rang na naíonán. Ar mhaithe le forbairt bhreise a dhéanamh ar shaibhreas teanga na ndaltaí, moltar roinnt fillochta a chur de ghlanmheabhair i ngach rang. Baineann na daltaí sinsearacha taitneamh agus
The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. The quality of the pupils’ spoken Irish is praised and a majority of the pupils participate successfully in simple conversations. Poetry and verse are recited with fervour in the infant class. In order to further develop the richness of the pupils’ language, it is advised that poetry be learned regularly in all classes. The senior pupils enjoy and benefit from using computers and MP3 players to manipulate and record conversations, both at school and at home. Reading is developed effectively from second class onwards. A majority of the pupils read fluently and they answer questions competently based on their reading. A suitable range of activities is undertaken in written work.

- Very good standards are achieved by the pupils across all strands in English. Their oral competence is developed systematically from class to class. In the infant class, due emphasis is placed on the acquisition and use of language across a range of relevant contexts. As the pupils progress through the school, they are challenged to use language at an increasingly sophisticated level. They confidently make oral presentations on project work to their peers and to wider audiences. Reading skills are developed methodically and the pupils demonstrate a keen interest in books. The pupil questionnaire results indicate that most pupils consider that they are achieving well at reading. The standard of writing is high and the pupils regularly write in a variety of genres.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. This is achieved through the implementation of highly coordinated and differentiated schoolwide approaches. Commendable features of provision include: the use of the pupils’ ideas as a context for problem-solving; the promotion of mathematical language and the provision of opportunities for the pupils to work collaboratively. Lessons are very well paced and significant time is allocated for the pupils to investigate concepts, predict outcomes and justify their conclusions. Most pupils surveyed stated that they are achieving well in Mathematics.

- Teaching and learning in Drama is of a good standard. The teachers skilfully assist the pupils to cooperate and communicate in making drama. The pupils’ communication skills, their instinct for make-believe and their ability to empathise with characters in role are suitably developed. As they progress through the school, the pupils demonstrate an increasing capacity to engage in process drama. In order to maximise learning potential, it is advised that the school provide further opportunities for the pupils to participate in reflection on Drama.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is excellent and opportunities for cross-curricular learning are employed skilfully. The school’s commitment to constructivist approaches to learning is realised effectively. The pupils display an exceptional ability to work scientifically. Innovative designing and making is a regular feature of provision and includes the use of ICT and robotics.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is of a good quality. The pupils experience being educated in a very inclusive school environment. Planning for provision is of a high standard. Consultation between mainstream and support teachers takes
place frequently. Individual education plans (IEPs) are devised through a collaborative process and take due consideration of the recommendations of external professional reports. Lessons for pupils with special educational needs are well structured and interactions between teachers and pupils are positive and affirming. The pupils are enabled to reach their learning targets through the use of a range of suitable teaching approaches. The pupils’ work is monitored carefully and the outcomes of continuous assessment are used effectively to inform future planning for teaching and learning.

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