An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Treasa Naofa, Ballyellis,
Gorey, County Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 17510R

Date of inspection: 11 November 2010
1. **Introduction**

SN Treasa Naofa is a four-teacher, co-educational vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. Enrolment figures have increased steadily in recent years and overall attendance of the 83 pupils 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:

   - The board of management demonstrates praiseworthy commitment to the school.
   - The principal and staff are dedicated to the welfare of the pupils and are commended for the successful promotion of a culture of team work and collaboration.
   - Positive learning environments conducive to teaching and learning are effectively created.
   - The pupils are very well behaved and are lauded for their productive engagement in learning.
   - Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and good relationships exist between the school staff, the board and parents.
   - The teaching of Mathematics is of high quality and overall pupil achievement levels are good.

   The following **main recommendations** are made:

   - A plan should be devised to guide the long-term development of the school. Additional emphasis should be placed on instructional leadership in monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of the school plan.
   - A review of the whole-school approach to the teaching of Irish should be undertaken to ensure the incremental development of the pupils’ oral competence.
   - In English, current approaches to the development of the pupils’ independent writing skills should be reviewed and augmented.
   - Existing assessment policy and practice should be enhanced and greater levels of differentiation provided to cater for the breadth of pupils’ abilities.

3. **Quality of School Management**

   - The board of management is constituted properly and demonstrates praiseworthy commitment to the school. The board plays a role in the consideration and ratification of the school plan. To guide the development of the school, a long-term plan should now be devised. As part of this process, a number of organisational policies need to be reviewed to ensure they reflect current school practice, legislative requirements and departmental
circulære and guidelines. These include the enrolment policy, health and safety statement and code of behaviour. All policies should be signed and dated on ratification.

- The principal provides effective pastoral leadership and is committed to the welfare of the pupils. He is ably supported by the deputy principal and assigned duties are carried out diligently. Principal and staff are commended for the successful promotion of a culture of team work and collaboration. Additional emphasis on instructional leadership is now required. In so doing, the principal, with the in-school management team, should play a leading role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of the school plan. It is further advised that in-school management duties be reviewed regularly to ensure ongoing responsiveness to the school’s needs.

- While the teaching staff is deployed appropriately at present, it would benefit the school’s long-term development to devise a policy on teacher deployment. A comprehensive range of resources is employed in most lessons, including effective use of ICT. The proposed review of the ICT policy and the establishment of a records management system are noted and welcomed.

- Positive and productive relationships exist between the board, school staff and parents. Parents are very supportive of the school and the parents’ association makes a significant contribution in the provision of resources to enhance the pupils’ learning experiences. Additional opportunities for parents’ more direct involvement in school activities should now be considered.

- The management of pupils is very good. The high quality relationships between the pupils, their feelings of safety and of being treated fairly are reflected in the positive responses to pupil questionnaires. Their participation in whole-school decision making is promoted effectively through the work of the Green Schools committee.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Curriculum plans for all subject areas and a number of organisational policies have been formulated. However, there is scope for development in the school’s planning and self-evaluation processes. While most curriculum plans evaluated provide appropriate guidance to support teaching, many organisational policies need to be revised. The implementation and impact of all plans and policies should be monitored on a cyclical basis. In so doing, action plans should be utilised to address identified priorities and to inform and guide self-evaluation in a purposeful manner. The results of standardised tests in English and Mathematics are used to assist in the identification of pupils in need of additional support. As part of an action-planning approach, these results should be used to create specific and measurable targets for pupil outcomes.

- Overall, the quality of classroom planning is good. While all planning includes some reference to differentiation, more specific attention should be given to the expected learning outcomes to be achieved by pupils of varying ability levels. As part of the school’s self-evaluation processes, consideration should be given to the advantages of a whole-school approach to the recording of monthly progress records.

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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Positive learning environments are created successfully and pupils are motivated in their learning. Lessons generally are well structured and pupil questionnaires confirm that most enjoy lessons and find them interesting. A suitable range of teaching and learning methodologies is employed and in a majority of classes pupils engage in collaborative learning opportunities. The extension of this practice is advised. While some fine examples of the pupils’ work are displayed, classroom environments could be further developed to support pupils’ learning. Most pupils verify that homework is corrected regularly and guidance is given on improving their work. Some effective assessment approaches notwithstanding, existing assessment policy and practice should be augmented. Assessment outcomes should be used to provide greater differentiation to cater for the breadth of pupils’ abilities, including the learning needs of more able pupils.

- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán sásúil. I bhformhór na ranganna, ùsáidtear raon leathan straitéisí chun scileanna labhartha agus éisteachta na ndaltaí a fhordhaítaí. Téann sé chun táirbhe d’fhoghlaim na ndaltaí go múintear ionchur teanga cinnnte le linn na gceachtanna ag ranglelbhéal áiríthe agus go dtugtar deiseanna rialta dóibh an teanga atá á fhóglaíomh acu a úsáid. Cé go bhfuil stórfhocal cuí ar eolas ag an gcuid is mó de na daltaí, tá mionchuid dóibh in ann ceisteanna simplí a chur agus a fhreagairt. Moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fheabhsú. Ba chóir bheim struchtúrthá in níos sóiléire a leagan ar fheidhmí an chur chuige cumarsáide. San athbhreithniú atá le déanamh ar an bpleán scoile don Ghaeilge, ní mór a dháirseadh ar leanúnachas agus ar dhul chuimh ó rang go rang. Sroicheann an chuid is mó de na daltaí caighdeán cuíosach maith ó thaobh na léitheoireachta de. Cleachtar scríbhneoireacht fheidhmíúil don chuid is mó agus tugtar roinnt deiseanna oiriúnachá dóibh scríbhneoireacht pearsanta a cheannadh.

In the main, the teaching of Irish is satisfactory. In the majority of classes, a broad range of teaching strategies is used to develop the pupils’ listening and speaking skills. Specific language input is purposefully taught during lessons at some class levels and pupils are provided with regular opportunities to use the language taught in a communicative context. While most pupils possess an appropriate vocabulary, a minority are capable of asking and answering simple questions. It is recommended that pupils’ communicative abilities be enhanced. A more structured, clearer emphasis should be placed on the communicative approach to learning. In the planned review of the school plan for Irish, attention needs to be given to continuity and progression from class to class. Most pupils demonstrate suitable reading standards. In the main, the pupils practise functional writing tasks, with some appropriate opportunities for engagement in personal writing activities.

- Competent practice is evident in the teaching of English. A majority of pupils demonstrate an ability to communicate suitably across a range of topics and in most classes they recite a range of poetry with expression. A variety of approaches is implemented to promote reading skills and most pupils achieve good reading standards. To develop reading competence further, more in-depth exposure to a wider range of class novels and the banding of books to enable all pupils to engage in independent reading at an appropriate instructional level are advised. Pupils’ presentation skills are good and some fine examples of their writing in a number of genres are evident. To enhance pupils’ independent writing abilities, a review of current approaches is advised. Also, oral language, reading and writing benchmarks identified in the school plan should be employed systematically in incremental development and assessment of pupils’ skills.
• The teaching of Mathematics is of high quality. Concepts are explained clearly and resources are employed purposefully. The promotion of pupils' mental mathematical abilities, their estimation skills and opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in a majority of classes are lauded. Overall, pupils demonstrate good understanding of content previously taught. They would benefit from additional development of problem-solving and mental mathematical abilities and more structured differentiation to respond to varying ability levels.

• The quality of teaching in History is good. Artefacts, photographs and ICT are employed effectively in lessons. The pupils participate with interest in collaborative learning activities and some opportunities are provided for engagement in project-based work. Overall, pupils display satisfactory understanding of work previously completed. More widespread use of timelines and project work to support and reinforce pupils' learning is advised. In response to the recent completion of the whole-school plan for History, the manner in which pupils' understanding of local history is progressed should be agreed.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Competent practice is in evidence in provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Lessons are well structured and teacher/pupil interactions are supportive. Overall, positive pupil progress is in evidence and pupils engage in activities with understanding. A variety of resources, including ICT, is used effectively.

• Supplementary teaching is provided through a combination of in-class support and pupil withdrawal, including a class group for Mathematics. In accordance with best practice, education programmes have been developed for pupils, in consultation with parents and class teachers, and are reviewed regularly. The proposed improvement in the range of screening and diagnostic tests employed is acknowledged. This will contribute to the identification and review of more specific learning targets to be achieved by pupils.

• The pending review of the SEN policy is noted and should include formal adoption of Circular 02/05 and a policy detailing the school's provision for more able pupils.

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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

- We wish to thank the inspector for her professionalism, advice and encouragement throughout the WSE.
- We are very pleased the report acknowledges the quality of teaching and pupil learning in our school. In addition the report outlines the supportive and positive relationships that exist between the school staff, the Board of Management and the parents.

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

- A long term plan will be devised to guide the development of the school, in conjunction with the Board of Management. The emphasis of this plan will be placed on monitoring and evaluation of the school plan.
- We are currently reviewing the whole school plan for Irish language, with a view to developing the children’s confidence and competence of the oral Irish language.
- Assessment models are presently being explored, with a view to incorporating greater levels of differentiation.
- We have revised our approaches towards the development of the children’s independent writing skills. We have also increased our resources in this area.