Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Treasa Naofa
Malin, County Donegal
Uimhir rolla: 17721H

Date of inspection: 08 December 2011
1. **Introduction**

Scoil Treasa Naofa is a mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry. The attendance patterns of the 87 pupils enrolled are satisfactory. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS, Rural Band), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Science was evaluated. The board of management 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 is very well managed by a very supportive board of management.
- The principal provides very good leadership to the school community.
- The teachers are very committed to their pupils and work in a conscientious and diligent manner.
- Pupils with additional and special educational needs are very well supported within the mainstream classrooms.
- The pupils are appropriately motivated and are making good progress in their learning.
- The active parents’ association is very supportive of the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Tracking and monitoring of the pupils’ individual literacy and numeracy achievements should be carried out on an annual basis.
- Moltar *Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Rialta* a úsáid chun dul chun cinn na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a mheas go caighdeánach. *It is recommended that the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Schools be used to assess pupils’ learning standards in Irish.*
- The use of a structured, phonics-based programme is recommended as part of the learning-support programme.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The work of the board of management is very effective. Members display great commitment to the school and there has been excellent progress with regard to infrastructural improvements and the provision of teaching resources. Going forward, the board should consider issuing an annual report on the operation of the school to the parent body.
• The principal undertakes her teaching and administrative roles with energy and enthusiasm and has made great progress since her appointment in 2009. She is very committed to school improvement and to ensuring that all pupils reach their potential. It is recommended that the principal visits all classrooms, including support settings, regularly to support whole-school literacy and numeracy initiatives.

• The principal is supported in the leadership of the school by a conscientious deputy principal and special duties post holder. Their responsibilities include the maintenance of roll books and registers and the organisation of assessment. It is recommended that the duties of post holders are regularly reviewed.

• The teaching staff comprises four mainstream teachers and two teachers for pupils with special educational needs. Based elsewhere, two resource teachers also attend for seven hours forty-five minutes per week. Teachers are very dedicated to the welfare of their pupils. They demonstrate commitment to professional development and are open to new teaching approaches. Three special needs assistants support pupils very effectively in the mainstream classrooms. The school benefits very significantly from the professional work of the secretary and cleaner.

• Overall school accommodation is excellent. Mainstream classrooms are furnished appropriately, very well resourced and highly commendable in terms of stimulating displays. The standard of display throughout the school, including photographic displays of the pupils’ extracurricular activities past and present, is highly praiseworthy.

• The management of relationships with the school community is commendable. The parents’ association is very active and works diligently to maintain the school grounds and building and to raise additional funding for school needs. Responses to parental questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, indicate satisfaction with the school and with how the children’s social and personal development is nurtured. However, responses indicate the need to familiarise parents further with the code of behaviour.

• The school is a very happy learning environment. Pupils’ motivation levels are very good and they behave in a very pleasant, respectful manner. Extracurricular activities, including traditional music, sport and the homework club, are highly praiseworthy. Looking at the pupils’ questionnaire responses, it is evident that they have supportive relationships with their teachers and enjoy their lessons and learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of whole-school administrative planning is good. As a part of the review process, it is recommended that parents are regularly invited to contribute views about school policies. The use of a web site would be beneficial in further facilitating the sharing of information and policies with the parent community.

• The quality of curriculum planning is highly commendable. It is now advised that a developmental and integrated e-learning programme be implemented.

• Good use is made of three-year action plans to progress a variety of curricular, organisational and resource priorities. Assessment data should be used in school self-evaluation to help set specific, measurable targets with regard to the progression of pupils in terms of their literacy and numeracy learning. Furthermore, tracking and monitoring of the pupils’ individual achievements should be carried out on an annual basis.
• Overall classroom planning is effective with some instances of highly commendable planning noted. Teachers prepare well for lessons and good use is made of the school’s extensive range of resources. Some consideration might be given to planning more specifically for the needs of more able pupils.

• 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 good. There are some very valuable practices in evidence including station teaching, collaborative learning, the use of differentiated learning targets and materials and the use of ICT. Parents, in questionnaire responses, indicated that teaching is good and that the school is helping their children progress in reading and Mathematics. Pupils find lessons interesting and indicate that teachers explain things clearly and correct their work regularly.

• Tá caighdeán sásúil le sonrú i múineadh agus foighlaim na Gaeilge. Baineann na hoidí leas as modhanna cruthaitheacha chun scileanna éisteachta agus scileanna teanga na ndaltaí a tharlaí. Fós, afach, tá scóip chun forbartha i bhforbartha na cumarsáide. Tá caighdeán sásúil léitheoireachta agus tuisceana bainte amach ag förmhór na ndaltaí. B'fhíú na scileanna scribhneoireachta a tharlaí, afach. Moltar Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoilanna Rialta a úsáid chun dul chun cinn na ndaltaí a mheas go caighdeánach.

• The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory. The teachers use creative approaches to develop the pupils’ listening and language skills. However, there is still scope for the development of communicative skills. The majority of the pupils have reached a satisfactory standard of reading and understanding. Writing skills could be developed, however. It is recommended that the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Schools be used to assess pupils’ progress in Irish in a standardised manner.

• Provision for English is good. Very effective practice was noted in the infant classes in the development of language and pre-reading skills. Team-teaching in the middle classes is very supportive of the pupils’ differentiated phonological, reading, comprehension and writing abilities. This should be extended into the junior classes to support differentiated provision. Pupils have good opportunity to engage in a range of writing activities. Pupils’ handwriting skills and the presentation of work have scope for development.

• The quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons engage pupils very well and active participation is encouraged through the creative use of concrete resources, games, hands-on activities, ICT and discussion. Throughout the school, a number of pupils demonstrate exceptional ability in Mathematics.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good with some excellent work observed in the senior classes. Scientific skills are developed appropriately and pupils engage very productively in well-organised, collaborative experimentation and in design and make activities. Exploiting opportunities to engage in seasonal observations and project work in the local environment on an ongoing basis
would strengthen current provision. Consideration should be given to involvement in the *Discover Primary Science Programme*.

- Assessment practices are effective. Suitable screening tests are administered to infant pupils and standardised tests are administered in English reading, spelling and Mathematics. There is a need for in-depth analysis of the outcomes of such tests so as to further inform support teaching. There is some very beneficial use of formative assessment which includes individualised target setting and insightful written feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. This practice should be extended to all classrooms. Annual parent-teacher meetings are held and written reports are issued at the end of the year to parents summarising their children's progress and attainment.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The quality of support for pupils with additional and special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Four teachers provide specific support in this area; two are based in the school and two visit from other schools. Both school-based teachers are shared with other parish schools. The organisation of provision for pupils with learning difficulties should be reviewed to ensure that pupils have maximum support with literacy and numeracy.

- Assessment, planning and preparation are generally satisfactory with some scope for development in terms of target setting for pupils with learning difficulties. Targets must be specific and indicate with clarity the focus of the teaching and learning. Teaching approaches in support settings are good overall. A structured, phonics-based programme is recommended as part of the learning-support programme. Further links with the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are recommended in planning provision for pupils with acute reading difficulties.

- Effective classroom support plans ensure that pupils with special educational needs are included and given very good levels of support in mainstream classrooms. There is very purposeful use of in-class support and station teaching as part of the learning-support programme. This should continue to be developed.

*Published March 2012*
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 of Scoil Treasa Naofa would like to thank the inspector for making the inspection a very positive experience. We are pleased that the main strengths of the work of the school were identified and that the commitment and dedication of all members of the school community was affirmed. We would like to thank the inspector for the courteous and professional manner in which the inspection 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

The Board of Management acknowledges the recommendations made in the report. The Board in consultation with the Principal and staff, has prioritised implementation of the recommendations as part of our action plan. Additional strategies have been developed including a new system for the tracking and monitoring of the pupils’ individual literacy and numeracy achievements. Station teaching in literacy has been extended into the junior classes. Action on other recommendations, such as the use of a structured, phonics-based programme as part of the learning-support programme and use of the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Schools, is underway.