Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Cholmcille Naofa,
Moone, Athy, Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla: 17787O

Date of inspection: 5 October 2011
1. Introduction

SN Cholmcille Naofa, Moone is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. It espouses a Catholic ethos and its mission statement is evident in the daily life of the school. There are 128 pupils currently enrolled and attendance rates are generally good. 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.

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 and the parents’ association are commended for their active support of the school.
- The principal provides effective leadership to the school community.
- The teaching staff work collaboratively and willingly embrace new initiatives.
- Provision for pupils with special education needs is of a high quality.
- A positive school atmosphere pertains and pupils are courteous in their interactions with adults and peers.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The Primary School Curriculum (1999) and whole-school curriculum plans should serve as the nucleus to guide teachers’ planning and practice.
- Moltar forbairt a dhéanamh ar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí i ngach snáithe den churaclam Gaeilge. Pupils’ language skills should be further developed in all strands of the Irish curriculum.
- Further provision for differentiation should be employed to ensure appropriate support or challenge for all pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of governance provided by the board of management is good and it has established strong links between the school and the local community. The board is to be commended for the provision of a productive learning and recreational environment. The board has played a role in the review and ratification of a large number of plans and polices. School finances are carefully managed. In order to inform the board about the good standards achieved by the pupils, the principal should present a collated report of
standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy at an appropriate time during the year. Procedures for informing parents on matters relating to the operation of the school should be extended.

- The principal provides effective leadership for the school. He exhibits good interpersonal skills and nurtures a collaborative relationship with his teaching colleagues. Members of the in-school management team carry out their duties competently and diligently. The duties attaching to the posts should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are responsive to emerging school priorities.

- School resources are well managed. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is commendable and pupils’ ICT skills are developed through a structured programme delivered by an external tutor. The school is adequately resourced to deliver the curriculum and these resources should be augmented as finances allow. The differential in class sizes should be kept under continuous review by the board.

- The management of relationships with the school community is good. The parents’ association actively supports the work of the school in a variety of ways and recently assisted in the compilation of a booklet for new parents. A greater involvement of parents in policy formulation should be facilitated. Parent representatives and the responses in parent questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching in the school.

- The overall management of pupils within this school is of a high standard. The caring and affirming atmosphere supports positive pupil behaviour. On the whole, pupils work conscientiously and co-operatively with staff and with one another and are polite, respectful and courteous. Pupils’ educational experience is enhanced through participation in a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is good. Organisational and administrative plans are contextualised to the needs of the school. Recently developed curriculum plans are of a high quality. One of the key challenges for the school is to ensure that the provisions of these curriculum plans become further embedded in teachers’ planning and practice. A framework for the cyclical review of all plans and policies should be developed.

- The school is committed to the process of self-evaluation and has formulated a three-year action plan. This plan would be enhanced by setting specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound targets.

- All teachers prepare written planning to support their work but in some cases, there is scope to develop its effectiveness to inform teaching and learning. The Primary School Curriculum (1999) and whole-school curriculum plans should provide the structure and content for individual teachers’ planning and record keeping.

- 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. The board of management is advised to formally record this decision in the minutes of its next meeting. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management and teachers; and that management has ensured that all teachers are familiar with the procedures to be followed. It is recommended that a copy of the procedures be provided to all ancillary staff, parents and external tutors working in the
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 overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. The classrooms offer stimulating learning environments for the pupils. Pupils’ responses to questionnaires indicate that most enjoy their learning experiences. Some good use of pair work and group work was observed during the course of the evaluation. There is scope for this provision to be extended. Good quality resources are used effectively in many lessons. However, over-reliance on textbooks and workbooks should be addressed at a whole-school level. Written work is regularly monitored. To optimise learning outcomes, further provision for differentiation is recommended to ensure appropriate support or challenge for pupils, particularly in literacy and numeracy. On the whole, the pupils engage actively in learning tasks and demonstrate enthusiasm for learning.

- Provision for the assessment of learning in the school is good. Appropriate use is made of a wide range of standardised, screening, non-reading intelligence and diagnostic tests. Commendably, pupils’ results are tracked in literacy and numeracy. Various good examples of assessment for learning strategies were observed during the course of the evaluation. Most notably, very good baseline assessment data was available in some infant classes. The further development of such formative assessment strategies is recommended to inform teaching and learning across the curriculum.

- Cé go bhfachas roint cleachtas éifeachtach i dteagasc na Gaeilge, tá scóp chun cáilíocht na foghlama sa Ghaeilge a fheabhsú. Tá darbdh i leith na Gaeilge á chothú trí an scoil agus baintear úsáid mhaith as Gaeilge neamhfoirmiúil i rith an lae. B’bhéim bheire a chur ar thoirbairt scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí agus a liofacht a chothú a thullleadh ionas go mbeadh siad in ann caidreamh bunúsach sóisialta a dhéanamh. Comhairlitéar éispéiris níos saibhre a sholáthar do na daltaí sa léitheoireacht agus a scribhneoireacht agus an bhéim ar téascleabhair agus leabhair saothair a laghdú. Aithrisíonn agus canann na daltaí dánta agus amhráin as Gaeilge ag gach leibhéil sa scoil. Moltar clár céimhite do na snáithí uile do gach rangleibhéal a leagadh amach sa phlean scóile ionas go mbeidh forbairt agus leanúnachas san fhoghlaim.

- While some effective practice was evident in the teaching of Irish, there is scope to improve the quality of learning in Irish. A positive attitude to Irish is cultivated throughout the school and good use is made of informal Irish during the day. Further emphasis should be placed on developing pupils’ conversational skills and nurturing their fluency so that they can engage in basic social conversations. It is advised that pupils’ experiences in reading and writing be enriched further and a reduced emphasis placed on textbooks and workbooks. Pupils recite and sing poems and songs in Irish throughout the school. It is recommended that a graded programme for all strands for each class level be laid out in the school plan so that there will be development and continuity in the pupils’ learning.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. A positive culture of reading is cultivated and pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to develop their reading skills. While some commercial schemes are used for oral language development, it is recommended that teachers use the curriculum as the basis for their oral language programme. Pupils engage well with rhymes and poetry and the committing to memory of a wider repertoire of poems is advised. Opportunities to write are provided at each class level and a good emphasis is placed on the writing process. A more consistent application of the school’s handwriting policy is recommended.
• On the whole, teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high standard. Lessons contain a valuable blend of discussion and practical exploration, some of which is undertaken collaboratively. Teachers make competent use of ICT and concrete resources to develop pupils’ understanding of concepts. The effective use of mental mathematical activities and the focus on problem solving observed in some classes should be extended throughout the school. Assessment results indicate that the majority of pupils have mastered the key concepts of the curriculum.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. Many teachers elicit pupils’ prior knowledge at the outset of lessons and integrate learning with other aspects of the curriculum. Lessons make regular provision for investigation and experimentation to develop pupils’ scientific knowledge and skills. In some instances, greater emphasis should be placed on free exploration of materials and discovery learning during these activities. Good emphasis is placed on exploring the pupils’ school and community environment.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• There is effective provision for pupils with special education needs (SEN). Pupils’ individual plans are developed collaboratively and are shared with classroom teachers. Planning and record keeping is of a high standard and pupils are making steady progress in meeting their learning targets. Support teaching is provided on both a withdrawal and in-class support basis and addresses pupils’ needs in literacy and numeracy. The teaching and learning observed was characterised by affirming teacher-pupil relationships and was well structured to meet pupils’ learning needs. There is scope to implement more fully the staged approach as outlined in the school’s SEN policy with regard to ‘classroom support’ provision.

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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

The Board of Management of St Colmcille’s N.S. wish to thank the inspectors of the Department of Education and Skills for the courteous manner in which they conducted the Whole School Evaluation.

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 school community is happy to report that in accordance with Circular 0065/2011 our Child Protection Policy has been revised.