An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bheinín Naofa (Cailíní)
Duleek, Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla: 17840P

Date of inspection: 3 March 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Bheinín Naofa (Cailíní) is an all-girls’ school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It is located in Duleek, County Meath, beside the neighbouring boys’ school. It is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. Currently there are 273 pupils in the school and 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, 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 managed by a committed and dynamic board of management.
- The school benefits from the careful and strategic leadership of the principal and in-school management team.
- The quality of whole-school planning is very good.
- A warm and affirming school atmosphere exists; the management of pupils is of a very high standard and pupils are nurtured and encouraged to do their best.
- Pupils apply themselves to their work with pride and interest.
- There are very good assessment practices in place.
- Teachers make creative use of a range of teaching methods.
- A wide selection of extra-curricular activities is on offer to the pupils.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is delivered in a positive and engaging manner.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the school review the wording of aspects of its enrolment policy.
- While the results of standardised tests are provided orally to parents, it is recommended that the school make provision for the written reporting of such results.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management operates in a very effective manner. It meets on a regular basis with minutes recorded for each meeting. School accounts are audited biannually, with financial statements being presented at each board meeting. The board actively seeks to provide a high quality education for its pupils and is proactive in encouraging parents to become involved in the life of the school.

- The in-school management team operates in a concerted and dynamic manner. It regularly consults with the wider school staff and provides practical support to colleagues and the school principal. Duties of post holders are identified following consultation with school staff and are frequently reviewed to meet the changing needs of the school. The school principal is committed and focused in her work. She carefully ensures that a warm and nurturing school environment exists where standards of achievement are monitored and supported.

- Classrooms and the general school environment are presented in a very neat and colourful manner. The school has acquired a comprehensive selection of educational
resources. The recent upgrade of information and communication technology (ICT) resources includes a very useful network system where shared folders of teaching and learning materials are available to each class. Staff members regularly engage in continuing professional development programmes.

- The management of pupils is of a very high standard. Pupils are content and cooperative with a strong code of respect and courtesy permeating all interactions between staff and pupils and also among pupils themselves.

- The school communicates regularly with parents through the use of memos, information fliers, text-a-parent services, school newsletters and the school website. Parent-teacher meetings are held in the second term and a written report is issued on the progress of each child in June. While the results of standardised tests are provided orally to parents, it is recommended that the school make provision for the written reporting of such results. Parents are encouraged to become involved in a wide range of school activities. Data from the parents’ questionnaires indicate that they think ‘teaching is good in the school’ and that ‘overall they are happy with the school’.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good. In devising policies, the school adopts a collaborative and consultative approach. A wide range of user-friendly organisational plans is in place. Similarly, comprehensive and well-constructed curriculum plans are in place, providing guidance on the implementation of the curriculum at each class level. The school regularly reviews its plans and policies at staff meetings. It is recommended that the school review the wording of aspects of its enrolment policy.

- All teachers provide long-term and short-term plans for their work in classrooms. These plans make very good provision for the specific and sequential development of lesson content, frequently detailing such content on a daily basis. Very detailed monthly progress reports are also maintained. While the daily plans provide clear guidance on lesson content and learning activities, it is recommended that the approach to short-term planning be reviewed to set teaching and learning targets within a fortnightly framework.

- 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

- Tá clár foghlama cuí, atá ag teacht go hiomlán leis an gcúraclam, leagtha amach do gach rang leibhéil sa phlean scoile don Gaeilge. Tá go leor rainn bheaga, amhráin agus dánta cuimsithe sa phlean. B’fhéidir a thullleadh cluichí teanga agus straitéisí chun daltaí a chur ag caint is ag comhrá as a stuaíomh féin a rianú sa phlean freisin. Baineann na daltaí táinigigh agus tairbhce as na ceachtanna. ‘Sna híse alranganna, baineann leas fointeach as scéalaoíocht, drámaí beaga, rainn agus amhráin go rialta sa teagasc. ‘Sna meánranganna agus na hardranganna, léirionn na daltaí dul chun cinn creidíunach i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge, go háirithe maidir le sealbhú foclóra agus nathanna cainte. Díríonn na hoidí a bhí a cheart do tharlaí a thabhairt do dhaltaí ar cheisteanna a chur agus a
A commendable learning programme for each class level, which is fully in line with the curriculum, is set out in the school plan for Irish. The plan includes a good range of rhymes, songs and poems for each class. It is recommended that the plan should outline more language games and strategies to encourage pupils to engage in conversation and to speak independently. Pupils both enjoy and benefit from the lessons. In the lower classes, teachers make frequent practical use of stories, drama, rhymes and songs in their teaching. In middle and senior classes, pupils are making creditable progress in Irish, especially in relation to learning new vocabulary and idioms of speech. Teachers direct appropriate attention to giving pupils experience in asking and answering questions. The teaching methods used are in line with the curriculum and teachers make good use of drama to stimulate pupils’ interest. Teachers use interactive white boards creatively to illustrate lessons and to scaffold pupils’ vocabulary. Reading and writing lessons are thoughtfully matched with pupils’ ability levels and the written work in copybooks is neat and tidy. In some classes, written work is based on the experience and life of the pupils. It is recommended that this practice be extended throughout the school. It is also recommended that further use be made of Irish as the language of communication and classroom management throughout the day.

A structured and comprehensive English language programme is in place. There is very good provision for the development of oral language, reading and writing skills. Through the use of discussion, debate, cooperative learning and pair work, pupils’ oral language skills are developed both in discrete lessons and within integrated contexts. The school is also proactive in developing pupils’ reading skills. Pupils are exposed to a broad range of literature. A strong focus on differentiated reading strategies, the use of supplementary readers, the systematic development of phonological awareness and the development of pupils’ word-attack skills have paid dividends in improving pupils’ reading competencies. Pupils enjoy poetry which is creatively integrated with a range of other subjects, most notably Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). Very good provision is in place for the use of the writing process and pupils write competently in a number of genres. Very good provision is in place for the examination of grammar and punctuation at senior class level.

The school is proactive in promoting achievement in Mathematics. The general school environment and individual classrooms are presented in a maths-rich manner. Pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons which are delivered in a lively and structured fashion. Teachers make good use of a variety of teaching methods, with cooperative learning and pair-work forming an important cornerstone of such approaches. A sequenced and well-structured whole-school approach to the development of mathematical operations is in place. Lessons make suitable provision for discussion and for the development of mathematical language. Teachers make creative use of concrete materials, providing the pupils with hands-on activities to explore and develop conceptual understanding. Content is suitably linked to the life experiences and environment of the pupils. A number of teachers make effective provision for the development of the pupils’ problem-solving skills by encouraging them to design and interrogate problems. There is scope for the wider use of such good practice throughout the school. Good provision is in
place for differentiation: however, in some instances, teachers need to ensure that the work is sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils.

- The quality of teaching and learning in History is very good. It is guided by a clear school policy which places due emphasis on the development of the pupils’ skills as historians. Teachers deploy appropriate methods involving co-operative research, pair work, discussion, debate, drama, cross-curricular projects and, on occasion, inviting guest speakers to classrooms. There is commendable emphasis on the examination of artefacts and historical evidence during lessons. High quality provision is in place for the study of local history and pupils display very good knowledge of topics covered. Individual classrooms are presented in a stimulating manner with timelines and various artefacts in evidence.

- In the four curriculum areas evaluated, teachers deliver their lessons in an enthusiastic and structured manner, making effective use of a wide range of methodological approaches. Resources are used to good effect, most notably ICT resources. Pupils’ progress is carefully monitored, with a very good selection of assessment techniques in use. Pupils take pride and interest in their work as exemplified by the high quality of presentation in copybooks. Data from the pupils’ questionnaires indicate that pupils think their teacher ‘explains things clearly’ and that a very high proportion of them ‘enjoy their lessons and learning’.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Support is delivered in a warm and affirming manner, in both numeracy and literacy. Pupils are either withdrawn individually or in small groups from their classes to receive learning support. Appropriate assessment and diagnostic tests are used and individual profiles and learning programmes (IPLPs) and individual education plans (IEPs) are written as relevant. Pupils’ progress is consistently monitored and their achievements and suitability for support are regularly evaluated.

- In all support settings, lesson content is suitably linked to the experiences of pupils and frequently integrated with other curriculum areas. The school places strong emphasis on early intervention and the differentiation of content to meet the individual needs of pupils. It is recommended that the school consider wider opportunities for differentiation for the very able pupils in numeracy and literacy.

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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 and staff of Duleek GNS wish to commend the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills for the professional, courteous and thorough manner in which the whole school evaluation was conducted. The board of management welcomes the very positive findings of the report, particularly in acknowledging the warm, caring atmosphere that permeates the school, the hard work of all involved in the school community, the high academic standards throughout the school and the value of all the extra curricular activities on offer to the pupils.

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 has put in place the necessary steps to ensure that parents receive both oral and written results of standardised tests. Also, the enrolment policy is currently under review by the board of management.