Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Odhran Naofa NS, Sonna, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Uimhir rolla: 17932U

Date of inspection: 28 February 2011
1. Introduction
Odhran Naofa NS is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath. There are 94 pupils enrolled in the school. Enrolment trends are stable and attendance levels are very good. The views of all parents and the opinions of pupils in middle and senior classes were collected and analysed and form part of the evidence for this report. The board of management of the school 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 supported by a conscientious and committed board of management.
- The principal and deputy principal provide very effective curriculum leadership.
- All staff members discharge their duties competently and diligently.
- The management of pupils is very effective and a respectful and positive relationship is cultivated between teachers and pupils.
- Home-school communication is very good and parents receive accurate information on pupil attainment.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English, Mathematics and Geography is very good.
- Teaching approaches for pupils with special educational needs are well co-ordinated and very effective.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school should devise a three-year planning framework, with a view to having a more phased, collaborative and sustainable policy-review process.
- To enhance the self-evaluation process, the school should set and review specific, measurable targets annually.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is correctly constituted and its meetings are conducted in accordance with recommended procedure. Financial accounts are certified by an independent professional. The board provides good support for the school through resource allocation, policy ratification and guidance on compliance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills. Board members are committed to improving facilities at the school.

- The principal provides very strong, effective leadership for the school community. He articulates a very inclusive vision and he values the co-operation of staff, board members, parents and local organisations. The principal is ably assisted by the deputy
principal, who discharges a range of agreed curricular, pastoral and administrative duties very conscientiously.

- High quality resources are provided to support teaching and learning. Duties are allocated equitably to staff members. The special-needs assistant, secretary and caretaker contribute to the smooth running of the school.

- Relations between the school, the parents and the local community are very good. Communication is enhanced by the use of newsletters, a text service and a school brochure. A very active parents’ association provides a range of financial and material supports for the school. Opportunities could be explored to further involve parents with specific expertise in supporting various aspects of the curriculum.

- The management of pupils is very effective. A respectful and positive relationship was noted between teachers and pupils. Discipline is very good.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is good. Administrative and curriculum policies are outlined coherently to provide specific guidance for staff. While there is evidence that staff and board members devised the school plan collaboratively, there is scope for parents to be consulted more widely during policy reviews. It is recommended that a three-year planning framework be devised, with a view to having a more phased and sustainable policy-review process.

- The quality of classroom planning is very good, especially where specific approaches to differentiation are identified. The impact of the school’s curriculum plans is reflected positively in the breadth and balance of classroom planning.

- A culture of school self-evaluation is being developed in the school. Valuable self-evaluation has been undertaken, involving the analysis of results of standardised attainment tests and the use of the Inspectorate publication *Looking at our School*. To enhance the self-evaluation process, it is recommended that specific, measurable targets be set and reviewed annually.

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 good overall. Lessons are structured and presented to foster pupil involvement and to promote discovery learning. Most pupils report that their lessons are interesting and that they enjoy their lessons and learning. While information and communication technology (ICT) is frequently used in
lesson presentations, it is recommended that further opportunities be given to pupils to use computers and educational software.

- Tá cáiliocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go maith sa Ghaeilge. Luairtear spriocanna foghlama le cruinneas agus úsáidear acmhainní agus teicneolaíocht chun na ceachtanna a léiriú. Leagtar bheim ar labhairt na ndaltaí agus mealltar caint neamhspleách ar chaighdeán inmholta uathú sa chomhrá beirte. Den chuid is mó, léann na daltaí le tuiscint agus cruinneas aith. Forbraítear scríbhneoireacht go córasach, ach d’fhéadfaí raon na seanraí scríbhneoireachta a leathnú. Baintear sult agus fiúntas as filíocht.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Learning objectives are expressed accurately and resources and technology are used to illustrate lessons. Pupils’ speaking is emphasised and independent conversation of a good standard is elicited from them through pair work. For the most part, pupils read with good understanding and with accuracy. Writing skills are developed incrementally but the range of writing genres could be extended. Benefit and pleasure are derived from poetry.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. While there is commendable emphasis on oral-language development in all classes, it is recommended that listening skills be further enhanced. Valuable systems of early intervention and in-class supports promote the teaching of reading. Pupils demonstrate good levels of phonemic awareness and knowledge of sight vocabulary. Writing skills are developed very effectively. Pupils have opportunities to plan, draft and edit their writing in a wide range of genres. Pupils’ writing is celebrated in school displays and booklets. Poetry is explored, recited and composed.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. In-class supports are deployed very effectively, enhancing differentiation, station teaching and discovery learning. There is commendable emphasis on the development of mathematical language, mental mathematics and estimation skills. Most pupils complete computational tasks with speed and accuracy. Problem-solving strategies are taught incrementally.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is very good. Resources, including ICT, are used very effectively to enable pupils to contrast distant environments with their own locality. Most pupils show good knowledge of maps and demonstrate good spatial skills. Pupils’ projects demonstrate good research skills in relation to social, physical and environmental aspects of Geography.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school’s policies and practices facilitate full access to the school for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Targets in the individual education plans (IEPs) and individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) are very specific, devised collaboratively and reviewed regularly. Very effective practice was noted in relation to the early identification and support of learning difficulties through the use of screening, diagnostic and observational data.

- The co-ordination of support teaching is very effective and there is very good communication between staff members in relation to pupils’ needs. Support teaching is provided through a combination of models, including withdrawal, group and in-class interventions. The quality of support teaching is very good and characterised by conscientious planning, effective methodologies and appropriate resources.
Results of standardised attainment tests are carefully tracked for each pupil and also analysed in relation to national norms. Results of these tests are disclosed and explained to parents verbally and in writing. Most parents express satisfaction with the arrangements for parent/teacher meetings and the quality of information disclosed in school reports.
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 is satisfied with the WSE report and accepts its findings.