An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Chaoimhín Naofa,
Philipstown, Dunleer, Co. Louth
Uimhir rolla: 18019U

Date of inspection: 20 October 2011
1. **Introduction**

Scoil Chaoimhín Naofa is a rural co-educational school situated in the parish of Dunleer, Co. Louth. It is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Seán Brady. It has a pupil population of 129 pupils and the attendance levels of the pupils 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 board of management, staff and the parent association work together effectively to provide a safe and stimulating learning environment for the pupils. The school building and grounds are very well-maintained.
- In-school management is highly commendable. The principal's organisational and curricular leadership of the school is effective and this leadership is supported by a dedicated, skilled and hard-working teaching staff.
- Very good quality teaching was evident during the evaluation. There is commitment to ensuring that pupils receive a broad and balanced education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English reading is very good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good.
- The practices in relation to the collation and analysis of literacy and numeracy assessment data are highly commendable.
- The quality of support teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar clár rianúil a leagadh amach le hacmhainn chuí ar mhaith le léitheoireacht na Gaeilge a hforbairt agus caighdeán a ardú.
- A systematic programme with appropriate resources should be prepared to develop Irish reading and raise achievement.
- There is need for restructuring of the support teaching timetable to ensure that levels of support are in line with the degree of pupils’ needs.
- The enrolment and admissions policy requires review to ensure consistency with legislation in respect of the enrolment of pupils with special educational needs.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school and its members carry out their duties conscientiously. School accounts are managed appropriately and are audited. The board is suitably informed with regard to pupils’ achievements in learning.

- In-school management is highly commendable. Leadership is characterised by a commitment to achieving very good standards in learning. The principal demonstrates commitment, conscientiousness and effectiveness in leading the school. This instructional leadership is very much supported by the deputy principal teacher and special duties teacher who undertake a range of assigned duties conscientiously. Action planning is used to facilitate effective school management. During the evaluation it was evident that a very good level of organisation characterised the daily operation and functioning of the school.

- The quality of the management of resources is good. The maintenance of the school building and existing educational resources is of a high standard. Resources used in the curriculum areas evaluated were used effectively. The school’s resources for the teaching of Irish reading and writing should now be expanded.

- The management of pupils is of a very good standard. Teachers praise pupils’ efforts regularly. The pupils’ exemplary behaviour and enthusiasm for learning observed during the evaluation were commendable. Almost all of the pupils surveyed reported in their questionnaire responses that they felt safe at school and enjoyed positive relationships with their fellow pupils and their teachers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Overall, whole school planning is good. Organisational policies are clear, specific and context based. The enrolment and admissions policy requires immediate review to ensure that it is compliant with relevant legislation in respect of the enrolment of pupils with special educational needs. Many curricular policies indicate clearly the intended progression of content and the skills to be developed at each grade level. A few curricular plans have been place for some time and should now be reviewed in light of staff experience. Teachers’ shared high expectations for learning should be expressed in the reviewed plans. Most policies confirm the date of ratification but some are unsigned. All should be signed and contain dates of ratification and of anticipated review.

- All teachers provide long and short-term classroom planning and prepare a range of activities and resources carefully for teaching and learning. Teachers’ comprehensive and careful preparation ensures the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum programme.

- The quality of current self-evaluation processes is very good. Collation, analysis and interrogation of data are well established. Systematic use of assessment for learning activity at individual pupil level is implemented and teachers actively use assessment to inform action planning, teaching and learning activity and support progression in learning.

- 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 teaching of spoken Irish is of good standard throughout the school and a positive attitude to Irish is developed among the pupils. Effective use is made of verses, songs, stories and language games to immerse young pupils in the language. Pupils recite them confidently with good pronunciation. Beneficial use is made of a range of appropriate resources in direct oral language teaching and pupils are questioned with care. Overall, pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of spoken language and satisfactory ability to construct sentences accurately in basic Irish. In order to increase the value of learning activities role-play and sketches should be used more to support extended conversation in the target language. Textbooks are used to teach Irish reading and the effectiveness of the Irish reading programme is limited as a result. A systematic programme should be laid out with appropriate reading material, in the main authentic books, in order to advance fluent Irish reading for every pupil. Good standards are evident in pupils’ functional writing exercises. Creativity in pupils’ personal writing should now be prioritised.

- The teaching of English is effective and learning and achievement overall is very good. Pupils display an appropriate ability to communicate with competence and confidence. Very good reading standards are in evidence. Pupils demonstrated very good phonological awareness. The teaching of phonemic awareness featured in some lessons. To build on this, specific phoneme-level awareness teaching could now feature in all reading lessons. The results of standardised tests show that many pupils are achieving very good standards in English reading. Most pupils reported in their questionnaire responses that they feel they are doing well at reading. All parents who completed a questionnaire felt that the school is helping their children to progress in reading. Good progress is in evidence in the development of writing skills and the standard of functional writing is very good. Very good early literacy activities including valuable teacher-supported independent writing were evident. While personal writing is practised up through the school, appropriately-facilitated and supported independent writing could be practised more frequently.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Teaching methodologies are employed effectively. There is commendable emphasis on the development of mathematical language, mental mathematics and estimation skills. A
combination of effective methodologies and very good quality early years mathematical activity and consolidation of learning contribute to well-developed mathematical understanding among the pupils. The results of standardised tests show that many pupils are achieving very good standards in Mathematics. Most of the pupils surveyed as part of the evaluation felt they were doing well at Mathematics and almost all parents who completed a questionnaire felt that the school is helping their children to progress in Mathematics.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts is commendable. Monthly progress records (cuntas mhíosúlta) indicate that a balanced programme across the strands is implemented and that pupils are facilitated to use a broad range of media. A good balance is achieved between making art and looking and responding to it. During the evaluation, learning in the Visual Arts was integrated effectively with other curriculum areas.

- The quality of overall teaching and learning is very good. Skilful teaching approaches supported by diligent monitoring of progression of learning were in evidence during the evaluation. The teachers create a positive holistic learning environment for the pupils and the pupils participate actively. There is potential to make more use of small-group teaching for differentiation. The thorough analysis of standardised assessment results in English and Mathematics and use of outcomes of this assessment to inform teaching and learning activity are commendable practices.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of teaching and learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The staged approach is accommodated and both in-class support and withdrawal approaches are employed effectively. Support teachers prepare appropriately and planning individualised to pupils’ needs guides teaching and learning. The deployment of the special needs assistant contributes positively to the quality of the overall provision. There is need for some restructuring of timetabling to ensure that levels of support are in line with the degree of pupils’ needs. In light of the growth in pupil population the school might initiate a review and rationalisation of the current support teaching allocation.

- The support teaching evaluated was intensive and a very good emphasis was placed on consolidation of learning. Clear explanation and excellent questioning were evident. Concepts were taught in a structured, well-paced manner with emphasis placed on demonstrating key concepts.

- Effective use is made of diagnostic testing and teacher observation and judgement to inform planning and tracking of pupils’ progress. Evidence indicates that pupils in receipt of support teaching are making good progress. Good communication and record keeping practices have been established.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. The representatives of the parents association praised the work of the teachers and the leadership of the school. All parents who completed a questionnaire either strongly agreed or agreed that they were happy with the school, that the school is well run and that the school has a good reputation in the locality. Almost all parents commented positively about the arrangements for parent-teacher meetings and the clarity of information provided to them about their child’s learning.

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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 S.N. Chaoimhin Naofa, Philipstown welcome the findings of our recent W.S.E. We wish to thank the Inspector for his professional, meticulous and courteous approach. We are very happy with the recognition of the high quality of teaching and learning outcomes in our school. The Board would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all the members of our school community.

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 read the report carefully and has initiated action on the recommendations.