Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Pádraig,
Corracrin, County Monaghan
Uimhir rolla: 18028V

Date of inspection: 22 September 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Pádraig, a primary school under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Clogher, is situated in Emvyle, County Monaghan, and has an enrolment of 208 pupils. In general pupil attendance is good. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 is commended for its effective management of the school.

- The principal demonstrates high levels of commitment, efficiency and effectiveness in his management and leadership of the school.

- The committed and diligent in-school management team contributes significantly to the organisation and development of the school.

- The industrious work ethic of all staff and their dedication to the welfare of pupils is commended.

- The parents’ association is very supportive of the work of the school.

- Pupils are courteous and engage enthusiastically in learning.

- The quality of teaching and learning is high in the subjects evaluated.

- The school and its environs are maintained to a very high standard.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that systematic procedures be put in place to guide the school self-evaluation and review process.

- A whole-school developmental approach to process writing is recommended to enhance pupils’ writing skills.

- The further development of in-class support models incorporating team teaching is recommended.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. It functions effectively and actively supports the development of the school. Members are assigned specific roles that are conscientiously undertaken. Accounts of expenditure are carefully maintained. The board is commended for its competent management of the recent refurbishment and extension of the school building.

- The quality of leadership is very good. The principal manages the school very efficiently. He maintains a strong visible presence among the school community and demonstrates a high commitment to the welfare of pupils. His effective distributive leadership impacts positively on the quality of pupils’ educational experience. The in-school management team has a clear and purposeful range of duties which its members discharge diligently. As a means of building on their capacity and commitment in leading learning, their role in systematic school self-evaluation and review should be developed further.

- The quality of communications and relationships in the school community is good. Consultation with parents is regularly facilitated to discuss pupil progress. The well-established parents’ association makes a significant contribution to the work of the school. Parents receive regular updates on school matters through newsletters and postings on the school’s website. The board of management is now advised to formalise communication with the parents’ association.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. Teachers are deployed appropriately with due consideration given to the needs of pupils. The criteria for the allocation of classes should now be agreed and included in the school policy. The ancillary staff contributes significantly to the life of the school. The school building and its environs are maintained to a very high standard. Orderly and stimulating learning environments are created to support pupils’ learning. Significant advances have been made in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a teaching resource and the school’s endeavors to provide a new computer suite to increase pupils’ use of ICT in their learning is welcomed.

- The management of pupils is very good. Pupils are highly motivated, courteous and co-operative. Pupil-teacher interactions are mutually respectful and succeed in fostering pupils’ self-confidence. Pupils’ responses to questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate that they feel safe and secure at school. Their participation in whole-school decision making is promoted through the work of the Green Schools’ committee. Consideration might now be given to the establishment of a pupil council to ensure their continued participation in school matters.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. Carefully considered organizational policies have been formulated. Curriculum plans guide teachers purposefully in their implementation of the curriculum.

- In general, plans are developed by the staff and ratified by the board. The parents’ association is given opportunities to consider some policy drafts. Further opportunities for parental involvement in policy formulation and review is advised.
The process of school self-evaluation emanates from review of school plans at staff level. To further advance this work, a more systematic approach to school self-evaluation should be adopted. The school’s strategic plan, as presented, outlines general targets to be addressed. These targets should be more specific, attainable within a certain timeframe and supported by detailed action plans.

Good long-term and short-term plans were presented by all teachers during the evaluation process. However, in some instances, a more defined link should be established between teachers’ planning and the school plan. Progress reports are carefully maintained by all teachers and these will prove to be a valuable tool in informing school self-evaluation and review.

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 high. A range of methodologies and resources is effectively employed and suitable assessment strategies are purposefully used to monitor pupil learning. In general the quality of pupils’ learning outcomes indicates progression commensurate with their ability. The potential of pupil self and peer assessment should now be explored.

- Good standards are achieved in teaching and learning in Irish. Most teachers use Irish informally on a regular basis. Many pupils are capable of using certain language exemplars capably. It would be very worthwhile to systematically build upon this learning and ensure that language content taught is both appropriately graded and challenging. The provision of suitable reading material in some classrooms is commended. Pupils read certain texts with accuracy and understanding. Further emphasis should be placed on the teaching of specific reading skills and the delineated phonologic programme implemented in full at whole-school level. An early literacy plan should also be developed. Pupils write with confidence and are capable of structuring sentences and stories accurately. It is advised to build upon this good work and provide further opportunities for free writing.
• The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Well-structured lessons facilitate pupils’ understanding of mathematical language and their competency in oral arithmetic. Skilful teacher questioning and effective use of active learning methodologies successfully promote pupils’ understanding of basic concepts and operational procedures. Their mathematical skills are developed in a conscientious manner in a variety of meaningful contexts. This contributes significantly to the positive learning outcomes in evidence. Greater emphasis on differentiated collaborative problem-solving activities is now recommended to extend pupils’ learning.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. In general pupils receptive and expressive skills are suitably developed. It is advised that the school further develops the oral language programme to identify clear language content and learning outcomes at each class level. A successful integrated approach is adopted to the development of pupils’ reading skills. A differentiated reading programme at instructional level would further promote pupils’ reading competencies. Pupils engage in a variety of writing genre. A whole-school developmental approach to process writing, incorporating the development of language, is recommended to enhance pupils’ writing skills.

• The quality of teaching and learning in Science is good. Lessons observed reflect an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils’ knowledge, skills and attitudes. Pupils speak confidently about a range of investigations and the principle of fair testing. The provision of specific science areas within classrooms would further enhance the development of pupils’ scientific skills. The school’s participation in the Green Schools Initiative and in a community-based gardening project is highly commended. While there are some examples of good design and make activities it is advised that further attention be directed towards this area of the curriculum.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual plans are carefully devised for all pupils in consultation with mainstream teachers and parents. Further clarification of learning targets within these programmes would enhance the monitoring and review of pupils’ progress. A commendable range of methodologies and resources is used effectively to ensure positive pupil engagement and learning outcomes. Purposeful and targeted in-class support was observed during the evaluation. The further development of in-class support incorporating co-operative team-teaching is recommended.

• At the time of the evaluation the school was awaiting sanction of a teacher to provide supplementary tuition for pupils with English as an additional language. Currently pupils are suitably supported by mainstream staff in their learning and in their socialisation within the school community. Appropriate assessments have been administered and it is evident that pupils benefited from the programmes implemented heretofore. Future developments in this area should consider models of in-class support to develop pupils’ cognitive language.

*Published December 2011*