Whole School Evaluation REPORT

Scoil Chaoimhín Naofa
Hollywood
Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla: 18054W

Date of inspection: 21 March 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Chaomhín Naofa is a co-educational Catholic primary school in Co. Wicklow. The current enrolment of 165 pupils reflects a significant increase in the school population. 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:

- Learning outcomes in Irish, English reading, Mathematics and Geography range from very good to excellent.
- Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and an excellent work ethic is promoted in each classroom.
- Teachers demonstrate very high standards of teaching and use a wide variety of teaching approaches and resources very effectively.
- The principal and the in-school management team lead curriculum and organisational development in a competent and effective manner.
- Excellent links have been created between the school and the wider community and the school is central to the life of the local area.
- The school building provides a safe, supportive and attractive learning environment.
- The board of management and the parents association are very active in the school, are very supportive of the staff and pupils and contribute significantly to school development.
- Teachers display a high level of commitment to ongoing and formative assessment and to whole-school and individual reflection.
- The school provides very good support for pupils with additional learning needs.

The following main recommendation is made:

- The challenge for this school into the future is to maintain the high standards currently being achieved. It is essential that a range of self-evaluation processes are developed that would support ongoing school improvement.
- In this context, it is recommended that continued emphasis be placed on group teaching and on developing problem-solving skills in Mathematics to cater, in particular, for the higher achieving pupils.
3. Quality of School Management

- The effective board of management carries out its duties in a responsible and proactive manner ensuring that teaching and learning are central to its planned endeavours.

- The principal provides proactive and creative leadership. He manages change effectively, provides excellent curriculum leadership and fosters the individual talents and abilities of the staff in a culture of professional collegiality. He is ably assisted by a skilled deputy principal and special duties teacher who take on very specific management and curriculum responsibilities in a very competent manner.

- The school building provides a safe, supportive and very attractive learning environment and an excellent range of resources is available for learning.

- Excellent communication links have been created between the school, the parent body and the wider community. The parents’ association is very active and contributes significantly to school development. The open and welcoming approach of the school is acknowledged in the parent questionnaires.

- A positive code of behaviour permeates school life and mutual respect is fostered. The care for individual pupils is evidently a priority for the school. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and an excellent work ethic is promoted in each classroom. Discussions are currently underway to develop a pupil council.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A comprehensive range of high quality organisational policies has been drawn up collaboratively and ratified by the board of management. They provide clear guidelines and procedures on all aspects of school life. Meaningful whole-school plans for all areas of the curriculum have also been collated. A five-year development plan has been presented and endorsed by the board as the blueprint for organisational and curriculum improvements in the coming years.

- Staff members are committed to ongoing reflection and have begun to examine some aspects of curriculum implementation. These focused deliberations have led to changes and adaptations in teaching approaches, resulting in significant improvements in pupil learning outcomes. A range of self-evaluation processes should now be developed that would allow for in-depth analysis of current curriculum planning and implementation.

- All teachers diligently and comprehensively prepare written plans for their teaching on both a short and long-term basis. The quality of this planning ranges from very good to excellent. Particularly effective practices include statements of specific learning objectives and learning activities and clear guidelines for differentiation.

- 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 and Learning and Pupil Achievement

• Teachers demonstrate high quality teaching skills consistently through the school and use a wide variety of teaching approaches to meet the learning objectives. Excellent emphasis is placed on experiential learning. The in-depth approach to exploring topics and concepts is particularly commended. Teachers organise learning using whole-class approaches, group and pair work as appropriate. Some differentiated activities and team teaching are used effectively to cater for the range of learning needs among the pupils. To build on this very good work, group and team-teaching should be further developed to enhance current provision. Pupil achievement in Irish, English reading, Maths and Geography ranges from very good to excellent.

• The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is excellent. Core reading skills are taught effectively and consistently at all levels in the school. Close monitoring of progress and the fostering of an interest in reading are the hallmarks of the school approach. Consideration should be given to providing a range of class novels in some classes to support the school’s commitment to improving comprehension skills. Oral language competence is very good and the pupils can give and support their own opinions in a meaningful manner. Some very good examples of personal writing were displayed and the various genres are attended to in a developmental manner. As the school continues to develop individual writing skills, further attention could be given to the type of feedback provided to the pupils and the way in which differentiated writing tasks are supported.

• The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is excellent. Learning outcomes have been consistently improving in recent years. Agreed whole-school approaches to teaching the language of Mathematics and mental Mathematics are being implemented meaningfully and interactive whiteboards are used judiciously and effectively as tools for teaching. Written work is excellent and pupils’ work is diligently corrected. It is recommended that continued emphasis be placed on group teaching and on developing problem-solving skills to cater, in particular, for the higher achieving pupils.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is very good. A broad and balanced programme is provided with appropriate emphasis placed on the development of geographical skills. Excellent resources are used and teaching approaches ensure pupils are engaged in the learning. Pupil achievement through the school is very good and very interesting project work is undertaken in the senior classes. The school’s commitment to environmental awareness and care is reflected in the fact that the school was recently awarded a second green flag.

The teachers foster a very positive atmosphere towards Irish and the work very conscientiously on behalf of the language and the culture. They place appropriate emphasis on informal Irish throughout the school, on the development of spoken Irish, Irish, on grammar and on the structure of the language. A very good range of teaching resources and methods are provided for lessons. The pupils have a wide vocabulary and high standards are being achieved in Irish reading and in oral Irish. It would be helpful to put further emphasis on the development of the Irish programme from class to class.

• Cruthaíonn na hoidí atmaisféar an-dearfach don Ghaeilge agus oibríonn siad go diograiseach ar son na teanga agus an chultúir. Cuirtear béim chuí ar an nGaeilge neamhfoirmiúil tríd an scoil, ar fhorbairt na Gaeilge labhartha, ar an ngrámadach agus ar struchtúr na cainte. Soláthraítear an-chuid áiseanna agus raon maith de mhodhanna műinte le haghaidh na goceachtanna. Tá stór focal leathan ag na daltaí agus baintear caighdeán ard amach sa láithioireacht agus sa Ghaeilge ó bhéal. B’fhéidir béim sa bhreis a dhíniú ar leanúnachas sa clár ó rang go rang.

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A comprehensive policy on assessment has recently been developed which places assessment as central to the teaching and learning process for all pupils. Some very good approaches are in place for both assessment for learning and assessment of learning. Initial tracking of individual and class progress has been carried out. The information gathered is used to inform teaching practices and approaches. Pupils are also beginning to become aware of their role in assessing their own progress. The school is commended on the detailed information that is communicated to parents on individual pupil progress. It will be necessary to refine the assessment policy as the school engages further with the process of school self-evaluation.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

The policy on support for pupils with special education needs provides clear guidelines for the development of learning support into the future. The current support is provided through a combination of team teaching and group or class withdrawal. The programmes of learning used in both the discrete resource and learning-support settings are determined by information gleaned from the class teacher, from screening and diagnostic testing and from psychological or other assessments. The planning for these programmes is very good and teachers are encouraged to continue to develop very specific targets for learning. Appropriate teaching approaches and resources are employed, individual pupil confidence and self-efficacy is fostered and pupils are evidently making progress. The high quality communication links that have been developed between learning-support personnel, parents and classroom teachers is highly commended.

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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 Scoil Chaoimhín Naofa, Hollywood on behalf of the school community would like to express its gratitude to the inspectorate of the DES for the professional courtesy extended to us during our recent WSE. We found the process to be both positive and encouraging.

The Board is very happy with the findings of the report. These findings reflect the high standards of teaching and learning in the school. The report affirms the dedication and commitment of the principal, teachers and support staff. It also recognises the excellent relationships between the school and the parent body. It confirms the commitment of the Board of Management in its overall managerial and coordinating role.

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 principal and staff of the school are currently re-assessing and designing new systems to encourage self-assessment in a range of areas. We intend to place renewed emphasis on group teaching particularly focusing on problem solving skills and strategies for the whole school.