

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Naomh Lorcáin,
Levitstown, Maganey, Athy, Co Kildare
Uimhir rolla: 18063A**

Date of inspection: 16 September 2013



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Lorcáin is a co-educational primary school situated in a rural setting in Levittstown, Athy, Co. Kildare. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and its ethos is effectively cultivated throughout the school. The school caters for the educational needs of children from the local community and from neighbouring towns, such as, Athy and Castledermot. At the time of the evaluation there were 47 pupils enrolled in the school. Attendance levels are generally good and the school is utilising its attendance strategy to address the poor attendance of a minority of pupils. 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 and the parents' association are active in their support of the school.
- The principal's work in leading and managing the school is highly effective.
- A collaborative culture exists among teachers who display a commitment to their work and to providing a positive learning environment for pupils.
- Pupils are well behaved and actively engage in curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- The quality and range of supports for pupils with special educational needs is of a high quality.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school is advised to review planning documents to ensure they provide a framework for continuity and development in pupils' learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- A range of appropriate strategies should be employed to ensure that pupils achieve a balance of knowledge, concepts and skills across the curriculum as part of their learning outcomes.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management effectively supports the school. The board is properly constituted, meetings are held regularly and members undertake a range of responsibilities efficiently. The work of the board has been focused on the development and maintenance of the school building and the ongoing safety of the school community. School finances are carefully managed and the board is committed to the review and ratification of organisational and curricular policies. Decision-making procedures are open and decisions should continue to be communicated to the school community.

- The principal exhibits a clear vision for the school and is committed to its ongoing development. Her work in leading and managing the school is highly effective. She engages in continuous professional development to enhance her leadership role. She is competently assisted by the deputy principal who has clearly defined responsibilities. The roles and responsibilities are regularly reviewed to respond to the evolving needs of the school.
- The positive school climate is enriched by high levels of staff collaboration. Teachers undertake a number of initiatives that reflect current priorities regarding the holistic development of pupils. They participate in a range of professional development courses to support their work and teachers' skills and abilities are utilised effectively to meet pupils' needs. The part-time special needs assistant and ancillary staff play a central role in the smooth operation of the school.
- Relationships and communications throughout the school community are well managed. The parents' association is active in its support of the school and has recently been affiliated to the National Parent's Council. A broad range of strategies is used to communicate with parents about school activities and their children's progress. In interviews and questionnaires carried out as part of the evaluation, parents report very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the operation of the school.
- Pupils are valued members of the school community and are treated with equality, fairness and respect. In pupil questionnaires, all respondents reported that they felt safe in the classroom and in the playground. A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided to enhance pupils' learning experiences. A wide range of resources, including ICT, is provided to motivate pupils' to learn.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole school planning is good. A broad range of well-contextualised administrative policies inform the operation of the school. There is ongoing development and review of organisational and administrative plans. Curriculum plans for the subjects evaluated are generally of good quality. The content of some plans should be extended to provide more explicit guidance for teachers' classroom planning and practice. Plans should include information on the knowledge, skills and concepts to be achieved at each class level to ensure continuity and development across the school.
- Self-evaluation and self-reflection are beginning to becoming embedded in the school culture and a number of areas have been prioritised for development.
- The quality of individual teachers' planning is good. Plans outline learning objectives to be achieved together with learning activities. Plans should be further developed to provide more clarity around the knowledge, skills and concepts to be achieved in each subject area. Plans should be more explicit about linking prior learning and lesson content with the real lives of pupils. The school reported that a common template for monthly progress records has been designed for the school in order to provide more clarity around the learning outcomes of pupils.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without

modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Lessons are generally well structured and a variety of teaching approaches was observed with good use of pair-work and team-teaching. In some settings, pupils' creative and higher-order thinking skills are fostered through active engagement. This practice should be extended to all classes.
- Pupils' engagement in their learning is good, and many can discuss aspects of their work with enthusiasm. In order to challenge the diversity of pupils' learning needs, there should be more attention paid to providing opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion, solve problems, explain new concepts and ask questions. Written work is well presented and regularly monitored.
- Tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Úsáidtear modhanna múinte éagsúla ar a n-áirítear cluichí, rólghlacadh agus drámaíocht chun an teanga a mhúineadh. I ranganna áirithe, daingnítear í trí amhránaíocht agus rainn. Ar an mórgóir, tá struchtúr maith ar cheachtanna agus cuirtear béim ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach. I ranganna áirithe, moltar níos mó deiseanna cumarsáide a sholáthar do na daltaí. Tá scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta á saothrú go céimniúil. Moltar don scoil clár céimnithe a cheapadh d'fhorbairt teanga labhartha na ndaltaí chun leanúnachas i scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a chinntiú ar fud na scoile.
- *A good standard is being achieved in the teaching and learning of Irish. Language is taught through a variety of methodologies, including games, role play and drama. It is consolidated through singing and rhymes in some classes. Overall, lessons are well structured and an emphasis is placed on the development of the communicative approach. In some classes, pupils should be provided with more conversational opportunities. Pupils' reading and writing skills are developed systematically. The school is advised to devise a graded programme for pupils' oral language development to ensure development in the pupils' language skills across the school.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Provision is made to develop pupils' oral and reading skills. There is a very good emphasis on the development of phonological awareness in the infant classes, and pupils in the middle and senior classes read with good levels of fluency. The school is focused on the introduction of a more structured approach to the development of pupils' comprehension skills. Poetry and song should be used to a greater extent as a strategy to enhance literacy skills. Pupils are given regular opportunities to write in a range of genres and good attention is paid to the writing process.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. The school has effectively initiated team-teaching approaches in some classes. This practice is proving effective and the school is competently monitoring pupils' progress. Lessons are well presented and developed. It is recommended that the development of mathematical concepts be enhanced by emphasising the pupils' accurate and effective use of mathematical language, and by providing more opportunities for pupils to discuss and explain how to use new learning to solve mathematical problems and complete assigned tasks.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is good. Teachers place an emphasis on eliciting pupils' prior knowledge at the outset of lessons. The school plan for History is based on the curriculum and the school has decided against the use of a history textbook. Pupils display a good knowledge of historical concepts. There is scope for artefacts and time lines to be exploited to a greater extent in lesson presentation. Teachers are advised to explicitly link lesson content to overall concepts and ideas in the History curriculum and to historical features of the local environment.
- Assessment practices within the school are good. A broad range of standardised, screening and diagnostic tests are administered and good analysis is undertaken. All teachers have developed assessment records to document pupils' learning with detailed assessments in literacy and numeracy. It is recommended that further analysis of assessment outcomes be used to furnish data on pupils' baseline competencies, attainment levels, learning achievements and future learning needs. This information should inform planning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Support for pupils with special educational needs is of a high quality and is provided by a learning support teacher based in the school and a shared resource teacher. There is very good communication and co-operation between mainstream class teachers and teachers in support roles. Support is provided flexibly on a withdrawal, team-teaching and in-class basis depending on the needs of the pupils. Teaching observed was of a high quality and was characterised by a lively pace and the use of a wide range of strategies and resources to support pupils' identified learning needs. Overall, progress records in support settings are of a high quality.

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 of Scoil Naomh Lorcáin, Levistown wish to thank the DES Inspector for the professional and constructive manner in which the Whole School Evaluation was carried out.

We welcome the recognition of the strong contribution from all members of the school community to the work of the school.

It is highly encouraging to see the positive school climate, actively engaged, well behaved children and the high level of supports for children with special educational needs affirmed in the report.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

We welcome the recommendations of the Inspector and the support given in these areas. In particular a graded programme for oral Irish development has been adopted across the school. In the teaching of History a greater emphasis is now being placed on the appropriate use of artefacts and local history at all class levels.

The implementation of all advice from the Inspectorate will form part of our ongoing school self-evaluation and improvement plan.