Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Eigne
Desertegney, Buncrana, County Donegal
Uimhir rolla: 18114O

Date of inspection: 19 January 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Eigne is a rural primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry. There are 79 pupils on roll with three mainstream class teachers and one support teacher on the school staff. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS, Rural Band 2), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion, and in the School Completion Programme. School attendance is good. At the time of this evaluation, the deputy principal had just transferred as principal to another school and a temporary teacher was employed. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama was inspected during the whole-school evaluation. 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:

- Scoil Naomh Eigne is a very safe, caring learning environment in which the teachers make a very good effort to develop each child to his/her full potential.

- The teaching principal provides commendable leadership to the school community.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good.

- The comprehensive DEIS plan has helped to guide and support the school community very successfully in prioritising improvements in literacy, numeracy and attendance.

- The pupils are very well behaved and eager to learn.

- Pupils with additional learning needs are identified promptly and are very well supported in their learning.

The following main recommendations are made:

- A review of the resources currently in use for the teaching of Irish reading is recommended. *B’thiú athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar na háiseanna léitheoireachta Gaeilge atá in úsáid faoi láthair le haghaidh teagaisc.*

- An e-learning plan should be devised and further opportunities to use information and communications technologies (ICT) should be exploited in mainstream classrooms.

- The board of management should facilitate parents in establishing a parents’ committee, affiliated to the National Parents Council (Primary). This would be very beneficial to the school.
3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is very effective and members are very supportive of the school. The board should facilitate parents in establishing a parents’ association, affiliated to the National Parents Council (Primary). Once established, the parents’ representatives on the board of management should attend meetings of the association in order to support communication between the board and the parents.

- The quality of in-school leadership is very good. The principal sets very high standards for her pupils and is dedicated to providing them with a broad educational experience. The post of deputy principal was vacant at the time of this evaluation. The other post-holder works very diligently and contributes significantly to the successful management of the school. It is recommended that the board formally reviews the duties of the post-holders on a regular basis to ensure that assigned duties are aligned to the emerging needs of the school. Leadership training for the in-school management team is also recommended.

- Teachers work very hard and skilfully; they are very committed to their pupils. There is evidence of effective collaboration and commendable shared-teaching approaches. A class-allocation policy is recommended to ensure opportunity for teachers to experience a range of teaching contexts. The special needs assistants support pupils very effectively in the mainstream classrooms. The school benefits very significantly from the efficient efforts of its secretary and cleaner.

- The classrooms are well resourced and have appropriate information and communications technologies (ICT) resources. The school library is highly praiseworthy. The corridor displays are commendable and celebrate the pupils' wide programme of extracurricular activities. A review of the internal accommodation is recommended with a view to providing a general purposes room. Additionally the removal of a disused prefabricated structure and, as a result, the extension of the playground, are recommended.

- The board and staff are appreciative of ongoing parental support. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. At the end of each school year, a written report is issued to parents summarising pupils' progress and attainment. Responses to questionnaires, administrated as part of the evaluation process, indicate that parents feel that the school has a very good reputation in the community and that the pupils are treated fairly by their teachers.

- The overall management of pupils is very good. They are enthusiastic in their learning and are well behaved. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation pupils indicate that they know the school rules very well and that they enjoy supportive relationships with their teachers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school administrative planning is very good. As school plans are revised and developed, further consideration should be given to consulting parents and to involving them more in policy formulation. The school web site could be utilised to facilitate the dissemination of key policies to the school community.

- The overall quality of curriculum planning is commendable. As a next step, the teachers are advised to develop an e-learning plan to include a developmental programme of ICT
skills for pupils. *Planning and implementing e-learning in your school* (National Centre for Technology in Education, 2009) will be a useful reference in this regard. Furthermore, in progressing planning for special educational needs, it is recommended that additional support be sought from the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

- The school engages very effectively in self-evaluation practices, the beneficial effects of which may be seen in a number of recent curricular and organisational decisions. During the evaluation, the teachers spoke enthusiastically about recent initiatives and improvements in literacy, numeracy and school attendance as a result of their purposeful action planning.

- The quality of classroom long-term and short-term planning is very good overall. There is some very effective use of thematic planning. As appropriate, records of monthly progress are maintained by the principal.

- 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**

- *Baineann caighdeán an-mhaith le múineadh agus le foghlaíomh na Gaeilge*. Ar an iomlán tá ag éirí go maith leis na hoidí líofacht mhaith teanga a mhealladh ó na daltaí. Léann na daltaí go caighdéan sásúil. B‘thiú atbhbreithniú a dhéanamh ar na háiseanna léitheoireachta atá in úsáid faoi láthair. Moltar fior-leabhair a úsáid chuithná níos leithte léitheoireachta a thabhairt do na daltaí. Cláraíonn na daltaí cleachtáil scribhneoireachta go hordúil sna cóipleabhair agus is léir go bhfuil forbairt leanúnach a dhéanamh ó thús na bliana ar a gcáigheáin scribhneoireachta. Déanann na hoidí measúnú leanúnach ar obair na ndaltaí agus tá na seicliostaí atá in úsáid sna méanranganna le moladh.

- *The teaching and learning in Irish in this school is of a very good standard. Generally teachers are successful in developing the pupils’ fluency in the language. The pupils’ standard of reading is satisfactory. A review of the reading materials currently used should be undertaken. It is recommended that real books are used to provide pupils with a wider reading experience. Pupils record their written work neatly in copybooks and it is evident that they have made steady progress since the beginning of the school year. The teachers undertake ongoing assessment of the pupils’ work and the use of checklists in the middle classrooms is particularly praiseworthy.*

- *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Early mathematical activities are very effective in the infant classroom; they engage pupils actively in learning and incorporate highly commendable use of concrete materials. In the middle classes there is very good emphasis on oral maths with target boards being used particularly well. Additional challenges for higher achievers and increased opportunities to develop the pupils’ estimation skills are recommended. Pupils display an enthusiasm for Mathematics, a sound knowledge of number facts and, in the main, an age-appropriate ability to carry out number operations.*
• The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. The teaching of reading is very effective overall. In progressing teaching in this area, further focus on comprehension strategies would be beneficial. While most of the pupils’ written work presents well with age-appropriate fluency, the introduction of cursive writing at an earlier stage is advised. The use of *First Steps Writing* (pdst.ie) would assist teachers in devising a more structured whole-school approach to the assessment of writing.

• Teaching and learning in Drama are good. The pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons. The drama contract should, however, be reviewed at the beginning of each lesson. Some good collaborative approaches in creating drama along with the imaginative use of drama to develop characters and to solve real-world problems were observed during the evaluation. The pupils worked confidently and were able to enter into the fictional world with ease.

• Assessment is good in the school. Pupils’ progress is assessed regularly using a variety of approaches. Standardised tests are administered in literacy and numeracy while screening tests are used to identify pupils with particular learning needs. Assessment practices in the junior and middle classes are very comprehensive. As a means of developing assessment for learning, teachers should develop the pupils’ skills of self and peer evaluation.

• The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers work in a very diligent, talented and earnest manner. While appropriate differentiated approaches are in place for pupils who have learning difficulties, provision for more-able pupils should be more systematic. From their questionnaire responses, pupils indicate that the teachers correct their work and inform them about how to improve. However, pupils realise the need for increased opportunities to use ICT. Parents, in their responses to questionnaires, indicate satisfaction with the quality of teaching in the school. They are less persuaded as to whether the children receive a weekly lesson in Physical Education.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The school promotes inclusion effectively and the quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Support sessions are arranged in a very affirming, structured manner. Individual education plans are in place and these should now be shared with parents. The quality of learning support in literacy and numeracy is very good; provision is focussed and effective. Early intervention strategies are successful. The benefits of a staff member obtaining a post-graduate diploma in special educational needs should be considered.

• The work of the DEIS co-ordinator is closely aligned to the priority targets identified in the school’s DEIS plan. Support is offered to pupils in literacy, numeracy and in ICT activities. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the successful transition of pre-infant children into Scoil Eigne and very good links have been established with the pre-school community. Home visitation and building relationships with parents are significant elements of the co-ordinator’s role. Some after-school courses and in-school activities are organised for parents to help them support their children’s learning and development. The involvement of parents in school initiatives continues to be an area for development.

• The school receives very good support from the School Completion Programme (SCP). The monitoring of attendance and various school activities—including drama classes, a reading-buddy programme with a local post-primary school, a transfer programme and an after-schools programme—are subsidised through the SCP. It is recommended that
further focus be placed on the literacy, numeracy and ICT needs of pupils through SCP activities.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

Despite the hardships of the weather conditions at the time, we are extremely grateful that the Whole School Evaluation went ahead as planned. We would like to express our gratitude for the inspector's advice and encouragement, and the affirmation of the work of the staff and Board of Management has been very heartening. We welcome the acknowledgement of good practice and high standards of teaching and learning in the school, in particular the references to the motivated and hardworking 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 Board of Management, in consultation with the school community, are committed to implementing the recommendations outlined in this report.