An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

SN Séamus Naofa
Glenmore, County Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 18158L

Date of inspection: 8 December 2011
1. Introduction

SN Séamus Naofa is a rural, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The attendance levels of the 127 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 board chose to accept the report without making a 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 committed to the school.
- The principal carries out his duties capably and is assisted competently by the in-school management team.
- The parents’ association plays a significant and successful role in supporting the school.
- The pupils are very well behaved and are eager to discuss and demonstrate their learning.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good.
- The recent investment in a school library effectively promotes the pupils’ interest in reading.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- An increased role for parents in the development and review of school policy is advised.
- Curriculum plans should provide greater direction for teachers and be implemented fully.
- In reviewing posts of responsibility, priority should be given to curriculum duties.
- It is recommended that a whole-school assessment policy be devised and implemented and that copies of the pupils’ annual written reports be retained.
- The increased differentiation of teaching and learning activities to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and supported in their learning is advised.

Sa Ghaeilge, moltar scileanna teanga na ndaltaí a tharbhairt ar thionóil a chumarsáide a chothú a thuilleadh. In Irish, it is recommended that the pupils’ language skills be developed more systematically through the school and that their communicative abilities be fostered further.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is committed to the school and is commended for overseeing the maintenance and improvement of school facilities. A range of useful organisational policies has been ratified, although aspects of some policies merit review. It is recommended that the board issue and make available an annual report on the operation of the school.

- The principal carries out his administrative and management duties competently. Since taking up his role, the rate of review of the school plan has accelerated. He is ably assisted by the other members of the in-school management team. They are commended for their valuable contribution to the operation of the school. In the review of duties attaching to posts of responsibility, the prioritisation of curriculum responsibilities is advised.

- A suitable range of resources is provided and in general, they are used effectively to support teaching and learning. While the school is well equipped with ICT, the results of the pupil questionnaires confirm that there is scope to extend the pupils’ use of computers.

- There is good communication between school and home. The parents’ association provides valuable support to the school and plays a significant and successful role in fundraising. While a facility exists for parents to contribute to school policy, the results of the parent questionnaires indicate that many parents are unaware of this opportunity. An increased role for parents in the development and review of school policy should therefore be facilitated. All parents receive a written report on their child’s progress and the introduction of a common reporting template is welcomed. It is recommended that copies of the pupils’ annual written reports be retained by the school.

- The pupils are very well behaved and are eager to discuss and demonstrate their learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- While a number of the school’s curriculum plans have been recently reviewed, there is scope to improve both the content and quality of these plans and the monitoring of their implementation.

- School self-evaluation has commenced and attention is now being directed to the teaching of numeracy. It is recommended that school self-evaluation practices be increased significantly to ensure continued improvements in teaching and learning.

- While all class teachers engage in long-term and short-term planning, it is advised that an agreed approach to short-term planning and monthly progress records be adopted. These latter records should allow for reflection on the learning outcomes achieved by the pupils so as to inform future planning.

- 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 overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Well-structured, whole-class teaching is supported by the effective use of some opportunities for collaborative learning. The responses to the pupil questionnaires however indicate that there is scope to further increase the use of group-based activities. The greater differentiation of teaching and learning activities is also recommended to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and supported in their learning. In general, learning is purposeful and well organised and most pupils surveyed report that their lessons are interesting.

- The quality of the school’s assessment practices is fair. It is recommended that the results of standardised assessment be analysed systematically and that purposeful in-class interventions be introduced in response to identified pupil learning needs. It is further advised that a wider range of assessment modes be utilised at all class levels. To this end, the development and implementation of a whole-school assessment policy is recommended. The pupils’ written work is well monitored, with most teachers providing formative comments to support the pupils to improve their work.

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go sásúil san iomlán. Éiríonn leis na hoidí rannpháirtíocht fhormhóir na ndaltaí a chothú agus léiríonn siadsan tuiscint chuí ar ábhair thráthúla. Baintear úsáid chuí as amhráin agus as filíocht chun foclóir agus teanga na ndaltaí a neartú. Moltar áfach scileanna teanga na ndaltaí a throbairt ar bhonn níos córasaí tríd an scoil agus a gcumas cumarsaíde a chothú a thuilleadh. Léiríonn cuid de na daltaí deachrachtaí i láimhseáil na mbriathra. Moltar tuilleadh béime a leagadh ar ghramadhach a theagasc agus a chleachtadh go rialta, úsáid na mbriathra ach go h-áirithe. Don mhórchuid, tá scileanna litéithe agus scribhneoireachtachta na ndaltaí ar chaighdeán oiriúnach, ach b’fhiú taithí níos leithne a chur ar fáil dóibh.

In general, Irish is taught to a satisfactory standard. The teachers succeed in encouraging the participation of most pupils and they demonstrate a suitable understanding of current topics. Appropriate use is made of songs and poetry to reinforce the pupils’ vocabulary and language. It is recommended however that the pupils’ language skills be developed more systematically through the school and that their communicative abilities be fostered further. Some pupils demonstrate difficulty in the use of verbs. Further emphasis should be given to the formal teaching and practise of grammar, in particular the use of verbs. Overall, the pupils’ reading and writing skills are at an appropriate standard. However, a wider range of experiences should be provided.

- In English, the overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. The pupils express their views capably and engage constructively with the opinions of others. In striving for further improvements in the standard of the pupils’ oral capacity, the use of attainment milestones is advised. Most pupils read with appropriate fluency and accuracy, and reading is actively promoted and supported by the recent investment in a school library. A coordinated whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics would further improve reading standards. The quality of the pupils’ writing at each class level is commendable and, in general, a wide range of genres is addressed. The pupils’ handwriting is of a high quality.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Commendable emphasis is placed on mental mathematics to develop the pupils’ number skills and they are enabled to use mathematical language accurately. It is advised that the pupils’ problem-solving abilities be developed more incrementally and that further initiatives to aid skill development in this area be introduced. The greater use of the
environment would also enable the pupils to apply their learning in a more meaningful manner.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is good. A range of methodologies and resources, including the *Stop Ask Listen Talk* conflict resolution programme, are used effectively to address feelings and emotions, to enable the pupils to communicate their thoughts appropriately and to cultivate age-appropriate decision making. Issues of personal safety are attended to consistently. While a commitment to the implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) was noted in the school’s plan for SPHE, the school should ensure that the RSE programme is taught consistently in all classes.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Appropriate educational plans are devised for pupils receiving supplementary teaching. The pupils benefit from focused instruction that is targeted to their identified needs and they engage actively in their learning tasks. The school is commended highly for consistently enabling parents to actively support their children’s learning. It is advised that options for in-class support be further explored and that prevention strategies be implemented for all infant pupils.

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