Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Phádraig Naofa,
Avoca, County Wicklow
Uimhir rolla: 18198A

Date of inspection: 24 March 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Phádraig Naofa is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance of the 201 pupils enrolled is good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to 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 is commended for its overall commitment and in particular, its role in the development of the school building and grounds.
- The principal leads the school effectively. She successfully fosters a culture of teamwork among the education partners.
- The cultivation of the pupils’ personal and social responsibility and active involvement in age-appropriate decision making regarding school activities is lauded.
- Parents participate meaningfully in a range of pertinent school activities that support the pupils’ learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. The openness of the principal and teaching staff to innovations in teaching and learning is praised.
- Collaborative learning approaches are used effectively to generate pupil interest, promote participation and consolidate learning.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The curriculum leadership role of in-school management team members should be strengthened.
- Tá gá cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt ar bhonn córasach tríd an scoil. The pupils’ ability to communicate in Irish should be developed systematically throughout the school.
- Greater promotion of the pupils’ independent writing abilities in English and Irish is recommended.
- More in-depth exploration of curriculum content in Geography and the development of the breadth of geographical investigation skills are advised.
- The school is advised to expand current approaches to the teaching of pupils with special educational needs to include in-class, team-teaching measures.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted properly, meets regularly and demonstrates commendable commitment to the school. In particular, its role in the development of the school building and grounds is lauded. Positive and productive relationships exist between the board, school staff and parents. The board is involved in the formulation of the school plan, primarily in relation to organisational policies.

- The principal leads the school effectively and successfully fosters a culture of teamwork among the education partners. The openness of the principal and staff to innovations in teaching and learning and the promotion of continuous professional development are praised. The in-school management team members perform their assigned duties competently and demonstrate flexibility in ensuring responsibilities are responsive to the evolving needs of the school. It is recommended that the curriculum leadership role of team members be strengthened.

- The management of relationships and communication with the school community is of a high quality. Parents participate meaningfully in a range of pertinent school activities that support the pupils’ learning. The school has a very committed parents’ association consisting of representatives from each classroom. In their responses to questionnaires all parents report that the school is well run and almost all affirm that they are happy with the school and their child’s achievement.

- The management of pupils is very good. These findings are corroborated by the questionnaire responses in which most pupils report that they have positive relationships with other pupils and their teachers. The cultivation of the pupils’ personal and social responsibility and active involvement in age-appropriate decision making regarding school activities is lauded. A school bursary is awarded annually to assist past pupils in their pursuit of third level education. The ongoing commitment to the development of the pupils’ skills in the performing arts through curricular and extra-curricular activities is praised.

- A good variety of resources, including ICT, is provided and utilised productively to support teaching. The school’s plan to increase pupils’ use of ICT is welcomed. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard and provide a safe and stimulating environment.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Overall, the quality of school planning and self evaluation is good. A detailed school plan has been devised collaboratively. The school is commended for its identification of priority areas for development and its work to improve the quality of provision for pupils. To build on this practice, the school should maximise the impact of its use of action planning.

- Each mainstream teacher prepares informative long-term plans. Current approaches to short-term planning and recording of monthly progress require review to ensure a greater emphasis on discrete learning outcomes and skill development for pupils.

- 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 good. Lessons are well designed and implemented. Collaborative learning approaches are used effectively to generate pupil interest, promote participation and consolidate learning. In their responses, most pupils report that their lessons are interesting and that they often work in groups. The pupils’ written work is monitored regularly and measures to track individual pupil progress are used purposefully, particularly in English and Mathematics. In order to accommodate fully the range of pupil abilities, the extension of these approaches and the consistent use of assessment results to differentiate learning opportunities are advised.

- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán sásúil. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge go rathúil trí dhéa-úsáid a bhaint as an teanga go neamhfhóirmiúil agus as raon leathan de rannta agus d’amhráin agus d’acmhainní. Léiríonn formhór na ndaltaí tuiscint mhaith agus dheáann siad sár-iarracht úsáid a bhaint as an stórfocal breá leathan atá ar eolas acu. Cé go bhfuil tú curtha ag an bhfoireann ar chomhrá Gaeilge na ndaltaí a theabhsú, tá gá a gcumas cumarsáide a thorbhairt ar bhonn córasach tríd an scol. Léann cuid mhaith de na daltaí le cuimneas agus le liofacht oiriúnach agus moltar an úsáid a bhaintear as raon níos leithne d’ábhair léitheoireachta i ranganna áirithe.. Cuirtear béim láidir ar scileanna scribhneoireachta feidhmíula a chur chun cinn. Moltar scileanna neamhspleáchacha na ndaltaí a thorbhairt tríd réimse leathan de seannraí a chleachtadh go rialta.

In general, the teaching of Irish is of a satisfactory standard. A positive attitude to Irish is created successfully through effective informal use of the language and through a wide range of poems, songs and resources. A majority of the pupils demonstrate good understanding and make great efforts to use their wide vocabulary range. While the teaching staff has made a start on improving the pupils’ conversational Irish, the systematic development of their communicative abilities throughout the school is needed. Many of the pupils read with appropriate accuracy and fluency and the use of a broader range of reading material in the senior classes is praised. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of functional writing skills. It is recommended that the pupils’ independent writing skills be developed regularly across a broad range of genres.

- The quality of provision for English is good. The pupils express their views with suitable confidence and competence across a range of topics. They read capably and in their questionnaire responses most pupils reported that they are doing well at reading. The implementation of individualised programmes of reading and paired reading initiatives is praised. Consideration should now be given to the earlier introduction of class novels in middle and senior classes. While some fine examples of the pupils’ personal writing are evident, it is recommended that they experience the breadth of writing genres regularly, while developing their editing skills.

- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high quality. A wide range of manipulatives is used particularly effectively. The increased attention to the promotion of the pupils’ mental mathematical skills is noteworthy and deserving of continued development. Satisfactory levels of pupil achievement across curriculum strands are evident with some discrete provision being made for higher achieving pupils. Most pupils indicate that they are doing well at Mathematics. To enhance the pupils’ problem-solving abilities, greater attention to multi-stage problem solving and problem construction is recommended.
• The pupils display laudable knowledge and understanding of topics undertaken in Geography. They demonstrate a keen sense of place and space regarding local, national and international environments. Environmental awareness and care practices are promoted effectively, including through the Green Schools initiative. The pupils’ investigation, recording and communication skills are fostered through engagement in well-devised project-based activities. A wide range of resources, including availing of the expertise of members of the local community, is employed purposefully. While the teaching of Geography observed is of high quality, the teachers are advised to ensure the in-depth exploration of content on an ongoing basis and the development of the breadth of geographical investigation skills.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Lessons are well structured and resourced and teacher/pupil interactions are supportive. Positive pupil progress is evident; including the development of their self-confidence. Effective communication structures exist between SEN personnel, school staff and parents. Appropriate education programmes for all pupils in receipt of support are formulated and reviewed regularly.

• A revised special educational needs policy has been drafted. Prior to ratification of this policy, it is advised that practices, particularly in relation to the implementation of the staged approach and substance of education plans, be clarified. It is recommended that current approaches to the teaching of pupils be expanded to include in-class team teaching measures.

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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

Ba mhaith le Pobal na Scoile mile buíochas a ghabháil leis na cigirí as an gcur chuige cúitéiseach, dearfach agus cineálta a bhi acu nuair a bhi siad linn sa scoil. Go háirithe táimid fíor buíoch as an obair a rinne siad ar ár son agus as an gcomhairle a thug siad dúinn ag deireadh trí mhí na cigireachta scoile a bhí mar chabhair dúinn amach anseo.

The members of the school community are also appreciative of the positive tone or the report. In particular the references to the school building and grounds, the culture of teamwork, the quality of teaching and learning, the receptiveness of teaching staff to innovative methods, the inclusion of students in decision making and the meaningful participation of parents in school activities. The recognition of the school’s enthusiasm for the performing arts is also welcomed and it is particularly gratifying to have the hard work of the Board, parents, staff and students acknowledged in a recorded document.

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

In response to the constructive advice extended by the inspectors at the post-evaluation meetings the staff have undertaken ‘in-school’ professional development for team teaching and it is planned to implement an ‘in-class’ approach in the forthcoming academic year. The teachers will also make greater use of assessment results to inform differentiated learning outcomes in their planning and to identify targets for team teaching and paired reading. Teaching staff have also attended talks on the development of literacy strategies with a view to fostering independent reading and writing skills in students.

Further class novels have been purchased and it is envisaged that with the assistance of the Parents’ Association a Book Club will be introduced in the school next year.

Táimid ag leanúint leis an gcomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil tríd an scoil ar fad agus beimid ag pleanáil anois chun feabhas a chur ar an nGaeilge fhoirmiúil agus ar an scríbhneoireacht sna ranganna.

The in-school management team are looking forward to extending the curriculum plans already in place in order to provide a greater depth and breadth to strands topics and to advance the learning in the school.