Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Móin na gCaor
Monageer, Ballysimon,
Enniscorthy, County Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 18308E

Date of inspection: 17 September 2010
1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Móin na gCaor is a six-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are 137 pupils enrolled and the attendance of almost all pupils is very 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 provides dedicated support to aid the continued development of the school.
- The work of the parents’ association results in the enrichment of the learning experiences provided for the pupils.
- The quality of the school building and grounds is excellent.
- The principal and teachers demonstrate high levels of commitment to the school and its pupils. Very good relationships exist between the school staff and the pupils and parents.
- The pupils are eager and motivated in their learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English reading, Mathematics and History is commended.

The following main recommendations are made:

- An action planning approach should be implemented to address the curriculum, organisational and resource priorities identified through the school’s self-evaluation mechanisms.
- Practices regarding individual teacher planning and the recording of monthly progress should be reviewed to ensure consistent links between classroom planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum, and to facilitate the evaluation of curriculum implementation at a schoolwide level.
- Discrete oral language lessons in English, that address the breadth of the primary curriculum objectives, should be implemented consistently at all class levels.
- Lessons in Drama need to incorporate the elements of drama more effectively to facilitate the pupils to participate successfully in process drama and to develop their capacity to improvise.
- The range of assessment modes in use to monitor individual pupil progress should be increased and the outcomes used to provide greater differentiation in teaching.
- The school should consider suitable ways in which it can involve parents more directly in its day-to-day work.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is strongly committed to the continual development of the school. The board works diligently on a range of issues that supports the operation of the school in general, and teaching and learning in particular. The ongoing revision of the school's enrolment policy and the proposed external certification of the school's accounts are noted.

- The principal and in-school management team fulfil their duties in a professional and dedicated manner. They contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and learning, in cooperation with other members of school staff.

- The teaching staff is deployed appropriately and most have experience of teaching a range of classes. The quality of the school building and grounds is excellent. All aspects of the physical environment are maintained to a very high standard. The school’s information and communication technology (ICT) facilities have been developed significantly. While a wide variety of resources is made available and used effectively to aid teaching and learning, the range of play resources available, particularly in the infant classrooms, should be increased.

- Very good relationships exist between the school and parents. Parents are kept informed of their children’s progress and are updated regularly regarding school activities. It is recommended that the school consider suitable ways in which it can involve parents more directly in its day-to-day work. The school has a highly committed parents’ association that makes a significant contribution to enhancing the learning experiences provided for the pupils. Very good lines of communication exist between the parents’ association and the principal and board of management.

- Interactions between school staff, pupils and their peers are positive and respectful. The pupils are well behaved. These findings are corroborated by the pupil questionnaire responses in which almost all pupils confirmed that they are treated fairly at school and that they get on well with their peers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The principal and teaching staff lead the whole-school planning process competently. Curriculum plans and organisational policies are considered and ratified by the board of management. The parents’ association has been consulted regarding some organisational policies.

- Curriculum planning is of a good quality and individual curriculum plans are reviewed formally on a cyclical basis. An extensive range of organisational policies has been devised. The development of a three-year plan to address the school's curriculum, organisational and resource priorities is praised. The use of an action planning approach to tackle these identified priorities is recommended, including a follow-up evaluation of the impact of interventions. The introduction of a systematic analysis of the results of standardised assessment in English reading and Mathematics is commended.

- While some classroom planning for teaching is of a good quality, the school is advised to review its practices regarding individual teacher planning and the recording of monthly progress. In so doing, it should ensure consistent links between classroom planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum, and implement measures to facilitate the evaluation of curriculum implementation at a schoolwide level.
Child protection policy and procedures

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 the parents’ association; 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. The school should ensure that its child protection policy and procedures are communicated to all parents.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The pupils are eager and motivated in their learning and in general, commendable levels of pupil achievement are in evidence. All classrooms are characterised by their positive learning atmosphere. In the main, lessons are well designed and the pupil questionnaire responses confirm that most pupils enjoy their lessons and find them interesting. The teachers draw on a suitable range of teaching methodologies and approaches. In so doing, they should ensure that the pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to use the school’s ICT resources and to participate in collaborative learning tasks. New concepts are explained clearly and the teachers build successfully on the pupils’ existing knowledge. The pupils’ work is well monitored and the teachers provide useful guidance to the pupils to help them to improve further. It is recommended that the range of assessment modes in use to monitor individual pupil progress be increased. The outcomes of assessment should be used to provide greater differentiation in teaching, including ensuring that the learning needs of more able pupils are met effectively.

- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán sásúil. I bhformhór na ranganna, cuirtear na ceachtanna Gaeilge i láthair go bríomhar, taitneamhach. Baintear úsáid as raon leathan straitéisí chun scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhhorbairt. Tá foilbhí breá leathan ar eolas ag cuimhneadh na ndaltaí agus a fhreagairt leabhartha. I ranganna áirithe, moltar níos mó thaidh nó thabhairt do dhaltaí ar na frasáide a thabhairt a dhéanamh. In the main, the teaching and learning of Irish is satisfactory. In the majority of classes, lessons in Irish are implemented in a lively and enjoyable manner. The teachers draw on a broad range of teaching strategies to develop the pupils' speaking skills. Many of the pupils possess an extensive vocabulary and they succeed in composing simple sentences and in asking and answering questions based on the themes under discussion. It is advised that, in some classes, the pupils be provided with greater opportunities to practise the newly introduced phrases, to recap regularly on content previously completed and to further develop their competence to use verbs correctly in their spoken Irish. A significant number of the pupils read simple texts with accuracy and fluency. In the main, the pupils practise functional writing tasks, with some opportunities for engagement in personal writing activities.

- Overall, teaching and learning in English is very good. A majority of the pupils express their views and opinions with appropriate competence and confidence. In order to ensure the comprehensive development of all pupils’ listening and speaking skills, it is
recommended that discrete oral language lessons, that address the breadth of the primary curriculum objectives, be implemented consistently at all class levels. In response to the implementation of a range of approaches to foster the pupils’ reading competence, almost all pupils are achieving very good standards in reading through the school. The pupils are making suitable progress in the area of writing. They are provided with opportunities to write across a range of genres and, in general, appropriate standards of personal and independent writing are in evidence.

- Teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high quality. New mathematical concepts are introduced effectively through well-structured talk and discussion and skilful teacher explanation and questioning. A range of manipulatives and, in some classes, ICT and opportunities to work collaboratively are used well. Most pupils demonstrate very good understanding of concepts across the mathematics strands and commendable levels of pupil achievement are in evidence. The pupil questionnaire results indicate that the school is successful in helping its pupils to learn in Mathematics. As a means of building on existing good practice and ensuring sufficient challenge for higher achieving pupils, the school is advised to actively promote a culture of mathematical problem solving.

- The quality of teaching and learning in History, in particular family history and local studies, is commended. The teachers are successful in generating the pupils’ interest in History and in developing their capacity to think critically and work as historians. A wide range of teaching approaches is used effectively. The school is praised for the positive impact on the pupils’ learning achieved through its participation in the Comenius Programme.

- Progress is being made in the implementation of the drama curriculum. The pupils display a keen enthusiasm for Drama and the teachers draw on a range of suitable drama strategies during lesson implementation. In order to facilitate the pupils to participate successfully in process drama and to develop their capacity to improvise, lessons need to incorporate the elements of Drama more effectively. In devising lessons, greater attention should be afforded to the cultivation of belief and tension, and to promoting the pupils’ capacity to reflect.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Pupils with special educational needs experience being educated in an inclusive school environment. The school’s commitment to inclusion should be reflected fully in the ongoing review of its enrolment and special educational needs policies.

- Teaching provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individualised education plans are prepared for each pupil following close consultation between teachers in support roles and class teachers, and discussion with the pupils’ parents. Consideration should now be given to facilitating the pupils to contribute in an age-appropriate manner to the formulation and review of their learning targets. Lessons for pupils with special educational needs are provided on a withdrawal and in-class basis. Lesson provision is well structured and resourced and lesson activities are designed suitably to respond to the pupils’ individual and shared learning needs.

- Pupils with special educational needs are making creditable progress in the achievement of their learning goals. A range of assessment modes is used to diagnose individual needs and to monitor the achievement of discrete learning targets. It is recommended that, in all instances, the outcomes of such assessment and the progress of individual pupils be recorded systematically and used to aid the pupils’ continued improvement.

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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 the staff of Scoil Náisiúnta Móin na gGaor wish to thank the Department of Education Inspector for the courteous and professional manner in which she carried out the WSE.

We are particularly pleased that the report acknowledges the dedication and commitment of the Board, Principal and staff to the school and its pupils. That it acknowledges the very good relationship between the staff and the pupils and parents. That our pupils are eager and motivated. We are especially delighted that the quality of teaching and learning in English reading, Mathematics and History is commended. Our school is delighted that the excellent quality of the school building and grounds is noted and that the important work of the Parents’ Association is highlighted.

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 working alongside the Principal and staff will facilitate the recommendations outlined in our Whole School Evaluation and will endeavour to implement them as effectively as possible.

- Action Plans have been drawn up to implement the schools short and long term curriculum, organisational and resource priorities.
- Individual teaching and monthly progress reports have been reviewed and a new approach which encompasses teaching outcomes has been implemented.
- Discrete Oral language lessons are being implemented consistently.
- We are currently looking at further models of assessment and our in-class support for maths and English is providing greater differentiation.
- The School has committed itself to involving parents in its day to day work with a parent reading system being used in the junior classes.
- At our school development day this year we will be looking closely at our approaches to Drama and ways of facilitating the recommendations of the WSE.