1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Pádraig Naofa is a Catholic, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Ferns. It provides education for pupils from junior infants to sixth class in a multi-grade setting. The overall attendance of the 88 pupils is excellent. 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:

- A strong sense of common purpose is evident amongst the board of management members and the chairperson maintains a visible presence in the school.
- The principal, who leads and manages the school capably, promotes a caring, collaborative and inclusive school environment.
- The management of pupils is very good and the teachers are clearly committed to their pastoral care, holistic development and academic learning.
- The parents are highly supportive of the school.
- The pupils, whose behaviour is exemplary, apply themselves well to their learning.
- The teachers present well-structured mathematics lessons that accommodate the multi-class setting.
- In geography, the teachers successfully exploit both the school and the local environments to facilitate the application of skills and deepen learning.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The school should enhance the provision for differentiated teaching and learning to ensure that pupils are challenged in line with their ability.
- The school should review its approach to writing to both facilitate a cohesive whole-school, systematic approach to the teaching of genres and enable the pupils to redraft their work in the light of formative feedback.
- The special education needs (SEN) team should extend its use of diagnostic testing and use these data to inform and monitor specific, measurable learning targets.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions effectively. A strong sense of common purpose is evident amongst the board members. The chairperson maintains a visible presence in the school. As reflected in the parent questionnaires, consideration should be given to the circulation of an annual report to ensure that all parents are informed of its work and achievements.
• The principal leads and manages the school capably. His competent organisational skills enable him to balance his class-teaching role with that of maintaining overall responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school. His pleasant manner promotes a caring and collaborative school environment. He is ably supported by his conscientious deputy who is assigned an appropriate range of responsibilities. The special needs assistant carries out her role capably and with dedication. The school secretary and caretaker contribute significantly to the smooth and efficient functioning of the school.

• The school, which is maintained to a very high standard, provides an aesthetically-pleasing environment that is conducive to learning. It is complemented by well-maintained grounds. The school has invested in a good range of resources to enhance teaching and learning. Consideration should be given to extending the range of mathematical resources particularly for the strand of measures. All teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their pupils’ learning.

• The management of pupils is very good and the teachers are clearly committed to both their pastoral care and holistic development. The questionnaire data indicates that all pupils and their parents are aware of the school rules. The courteous pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour and apply themselves very well to their learning.

• The compact nature of the school community greatly facilitates informal communication with the parent body. The school operates an ‘open-door’ policy and the parent representatives note the approachability of staff as a key strength of the school. The school also employs an appropriate range of strategies to facilitate more formal communication.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of whole-school planning is of a very good standard. The school provides a comprehensive school plan that encompasses curriculum, organisational and administrative policies which are ratified by the board. Most parents indicate that they are invited to contribute views about school policies. The school engages in a range of informal self-evaluation strategies and also reviews policies systematically. Consideration should now be given to the extension of this practice to include the monitoring of initiatives against both standardised test results and feedback from pupils.

• The quality of classroom planning is good. All teachers plan conscientiously using a common school template. To complement this good practice, consideration should be given to enhancing the specificity of learning objectives and making more explicit provision for differentiation.

• 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 and learning is good. The teachers present well-prepared and well-structured lessons that make some provision for paired activities and group work. To ensure that all pupils are challenged in line with their ability, the school should review its provision for differentiated teaching and learning. The motivated pupils apply themselves well to their learning and attain good standards. All teachers use a variety of assessment modes including teacher observation, teacher-designed tests and tasks, checklists and observation notes. They monitor and mark their pupils’ work conscientiously. Consideration should now be given to enabling the pupils to engage in both peer and self-assessment. Appropriate provision is made for formal communication with parents regarding their children’s progress.

- Baintear amach caighdeán maith i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Tá neart ábhar priontáilte le feiceáil i dtimpeallacht na scóile agus eagráitear ‘Seachtain na Gaeilge’ sa scoil chomh maith – sa chaoi sin, cothaítear dearadh dearacht a leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar theang a teagaisc sna ranganna uilig agus leagann na múinteoirí an bhéim chuí ar an gcur chuige cumarsáide. Úsáidtear dánta agus amhráin mar thairisc ón laghdú i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar theang a teagaisc sna ranganna uilig agus leagann na múinteoirí an bhéim chuí ar an gcur chuige cumarsáide. Úsáidtear dánta agus amhráin mar thairisc ón laghdú i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar theang a teagaisc sna ranganna uilig agus leagann na múinteoirí an bhéim chuí ar an gcur chuige cumarsáide. Úsáidtear dánta agus amhráin mar thairisc ón laghdú i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar theang a teagaisc sna ranganna uilig agus leagann na múinteoirí an bhéim chuí ar an gcur chuige cumarsáide. Úsáidtear dánta agus amhráin mar thairisc ón laghdú i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil.

The teaching and learning of Irish is of a good standard. The school promotes a positive attitude towards the language through the provision of a print-rich environment and an ‘Irish Week.’ In all classes, Irish is used as the medium of instruction and teachers place appropriate emphasis on the communicative approach. Poems and songs are a feature of lessons in all class rooms. Most pupils engage confidently in oral language activities and many attain very good levels of oral competence. Pupils are enabled to write in a variety of genres. They read with varying levels of fluency and comprehension. It is recommended that the school review the provision for continuity and progression in this curriculum strand.

- The teaching of English is good. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on the development of oral language skills and the pupils are very willing to express their opinions. In the infant and junior classes, the teachers make good provision for the development of phonological awareness and the acquisition of word-attack skills. In the middle and senior classes, effective use is made of class novels and poetry to foster and develop a love of literature and enrich the pupils’ writing skills. Pupils display varying reading abilities and the school should extend the provision for the explicit teaching of specific reading skills to differentiated reading groups. Appropriate provision is made for the teaching of spelling and grammar. Across the school, the pupils are enabled to express themselves in a range of writing genres. Written presentation is of a good standard. To further enhance the quality of their work, it is recommended that the school adopt a cyclical approach to the teaching of genres and enable the pupils to amend their work in the light of formative feedback.

- The teaching of mathematics is good and the pupils display good levels of attainment. All teachers present well-structured lessons that accommodate the multi-class setting. In addition to whole-class teaching, pedagogy incorporates paired activities and individual work. To further facilitate differentiation, consideration should be given to the provision of open-ended mathematical investigations and collaborative group work in which roles are assigned according to ability. Throughout the school, appropriate emphasis is placed on
the acquisition and application of mathematical language. The teachers link mathematical concepts to the pupils’ environment and facilitate the effective integration of mathematics with other curriculum areas. To further enhance the pupils’ understanding of concepts, more extended engagement in activity-based learning is advised.

- The standards of teaching and learning in geography are very good. The planned programme facilitates a balanced delivery of the various curriculum strands. The teachers successfully exploit both the school and the local environment to illuminate concepts, facilitate the application of skills and deepen learning. The pupils are enabled to participate in a variety of mapping activities in a manner that facilitates continuity and progression in their learning. Pupils engage in a range of project work that promotes their use of a variety of sources including photographs, reference materials and ICT. They demonstrate appropriate geographical knowledge particularly in relation to the local environment, and environmental awareness and care. The school is working towards its second flag with the Green Schools’ Initiative.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of teaching and learning in SEN is good. The school policy promotes the staged approach and early intervention strategies. The SEN team comprises a shared support teacher and a part-time resource teacher. These teachers present structured lessons that capture and maintain their pupils’ interest. The current model of intervention primarily comprises withdrawal and consideration should now be given to extending the provision for in-class support where feasible. The SEN teachers produce individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning profiles (IPLPs) as appropriate which form the basis of their short-term planning. The quality of the individual learning targets varies. To facilitate continuity and progression in the pupils’ learning it is recommended that the school adopt a common planning format. The use of diagnostic testing should be extended, with results providing the basis for specific, measurable targets for all pupils.

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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 of the school would like to thank the D.E.S. Inspector for her courtesy, professionalism and guidance throughout the WSE process. The Board of Management is encouraged by the recognition of the dedication and commitment of the Principal and staff in the school.

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 and staff are currently in the process of implementing the recommendations as given in the report.