

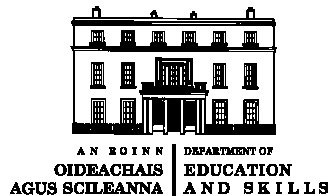
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**An Teaghlaigh Naofa
Military Road, Waterford
Uimhir rolla: 185090**

Date of inspection: 7 November 2013



1. Introduction

An Teaghlaigh Naofa is an all-girls junior primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The school participates in the Department's *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* programme and also receives support through the *School Completion Programme*. There are 304 pupils enrolled and the attendance of most pupils is very good.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream class settings and four support teaching settings. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The pupils experience a supportive and inclusive learning environment and the staff are strongly committed to the pupils' care, welfare and learning.
- The board of management functions effectively in supporting the work of the school.
- The principal leads the school successfully and exemplifies the ethos and traditions of the Mercy sisters in her day-to-day management.
- The in-school management team contributes substantially to the implementation of a range of teaching and learning initiatives.
- Relations and communication with parents are of a very high quality and parental involvement is encouraged successfully.
- Resulting from the effective use of a variety of literacy and numeracy programmes, considerable improvements in pupil achievement in English reading and Mathematics are in evidence year-on-year.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In English, a comprehensive, whole-school programme to develop the pupils' listening and speaking skills should be implemented.
- In coordinating provision for pupils with additional learning needs, greater support should be allocated to prevention/early intervention at junior infant level.
- It is recommended that the *Aistear* programme be extended to all infant classes to enable the pupils to learn and develop through play.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions effectively and the experience and expertise of its members are employed productively to support the work of the school. The board's participation in policy development and its consideration of pupil achievement matters are

commendable. The board is advised to update the school's enrolment and retention policies to ensure compliance with pertinent legislation and Department circular.

- The principal leads the school successfully and exemplifies the ethos and traditions of the Mercy sisters in her day-to-day management. In particular, she cultivates a positive school climate and successfully promotes high expectations of pupil behaviour and participation. The principal is ably assisted by the members of the in-school management team who contribute substantially to the implementation of a range of teaching and learning initiatives.
- The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. The substantial investment in resources, particularly for literacy, is used very well. As financial resources permit, it would be beneficial to increase literacy resources further and to provide for the pupils' regular use of ICT.
- Relations and communication with parents are of a very high quality. A range of worthwhile initiatives is implemented through the school's home/school/community liaison service. Parental involvement in the life of the school is encouraged successfully and includes parents working in classrooms to support literacy and numeracy and their participation in the diverse adult education programme provided. The school has a highly committed parents' association which organises and supports a variety of school activities.
- The management of pupils is very good. Their pastoral needs are managed effectively and their holistic development is nurtured. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents reported that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that the school helps their child's social and personal development. The school is commended highly for its efforts in promoting pupil attendance and punctuality.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Whole-school planning is of a good quality overall. School self-evaluation has progressed to formally include the perspectives of parents and pupils and a clear programme of actions has been agreed. It would now be advantageous to clarify further the targets set for each priority area.
- Each class teacher engages in long-term and short-term planning and recording of monthly progress. In order to achieve a more consistent and beneficial whole-school approach to short-term planning, the teachers are advised to document clearly the intended learning outcomes for pupils in all subject areas. Planning for differentiation should be outlined in greater detail.
- 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

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement is of a good standard overall, with very good practice in evidence in some classrooms. Most teachers draw on a variety of suitable methodologies, including opportunities for active and collaborative learning. The pupils demonstrate high levels of interest and engagement. The school is praised for

commencing the implementation of *Aistear* which enables pupils to learn and develop through play. It is recommended that this programme be extended to all infant classes. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents expressed the view that teaching is good in the school and that their child is doing well.

- The teachers employ some useful assessment approaches to evaluate pupil learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The more recent introduction of pupil self-assessment is welcomed and provides a helpful mechanism for pupils to review their learning and achievements with their parents.
- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí ar chaighdeán sásúil. Éiríonn go rathúil leis na hoidí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a chothú. Tá foclóir cuí ag tromlach na ndaltaí agus éiríonn le cuid díobh abairtí simplí a chumadh. I bhformhór na ranganna, baintear dea-úsáid as raon straitéisí oiriúnacha. Chun cumas labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, b'fhiú béim níos láidre a leagadh ar scileanna éisteachta agus labhartha scoite a chur cun cinn ar bhonn scoile uile. Chun an sprioc seo a bhaint amach, moltar struchtúir teanga agus briathra a mhúineadh go córasach agus a chleachtadh i slite nádúrtha agus béim níos láidre a chur ar an gcumarsáid.

In the main, teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is of a satisfactory standard. The teachers successfully cultivate a positive attitude to the language. A majority of pupils have acquired an appropriate vocabulary and some of them can compose simple sentences. A range of appropriate strategies is used well in a majority of classrooms. In order to further develop the pupils' speaking skills, a greater schoolwide emphasis should be placed on the development of discrete listening and speaking skills. To achieve this goal, it is recommended that language structures and verbs be taught systematically and practised in everyday contexts and that a greater emphasis be placed on communication.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. The pupils speak confidently when interacting with their teachers and peers. There is however scope to develop their richness of vocabulary and their capacity to communicate in more complex ways. To this end, a comprehensive, whole-school programme to develop the pupils' listening and speaking skills should be implemented. A number of literacy initiatives, including *Reading Recovery*, *Literacy Lift-Off* and *Family Reading Sessions* are being implemented successfully. As a consequence, reading standards have improved steadily year-on-year. As a means of continuing this praiseworthy work, the school should agree on the implementation of a single, comprehensive phonics programme along with a structured phonological awareness programme. Consideration might also be given to extending the current effective use of individualised readers and novels in place of the traditional class readers in use in some classes. Many fine examples of emergent writing, and writing across a range of genres are in evidence.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable. Praiseworthy features of provision include the development of number competence, the practise of mathematical language and the cultivation of a maths-rich environment. Most pupils display good understanding of content previously addressed, with considerable improvements in overall achievement year-on-year. The implementation of *Ready, Set, Go-Maths* and *Maths for Fun* is impacting positively on learning outcomes. It would be beneficial to further develop practice in the area of oral/mental Mathematics and to ensure stronger links with the pupils' own lives and experiences.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is good. Performance, in particular song singing, is a successful feature in almost all classes and the pupils gain great enjoyment from participating in the annual summer concert. The pupils benefit from

well-structured opportunities to listen and respond to a variety of musical genres. The current school improvement focus on composing is commendable. It is now advised that a systematic schoolwide approach to musical literacy be agreed. In cooperation with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the pupils develop their tin whistle skills and the quality of their performance is praiseworthy.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Positive relationships between support teachers and pupils are clearly in evidence and the pupils' belief in their capacity to achieve is cultivated successfully. The support teachers have participated in a range of professional development opportunities and a significant number of valuable initiatives are being implemented on an in-class and withdrawal basis. Praiseworthy pupil progress is in evidence. In order to develop provision further, it is recommended that greater support be allocated to prevention/early intervention at junior infant level and the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning be implemented fully. It would also be beneficial to pupil learning for school management to support opportunities for teacher engagement with external professional networks, such as the Irish Learning Support Association. School management should also explore the possibility of teacher participation in in-depth, accredited professional development courses, such as the post-graduate diploma in special educational needs.
- A significant number of pupils for whom English is an additional language attend An Teaghlaigh Naofa and a supportive learning environment for second language learning is created. The *Primary School Assessment Kit* is used to assess language proficiency and the language support programme *Up and Away* is implemented. At present, there is scope to develop the quality of language support to ensure that pupils gain maximum benefit from the teaching and learning interventions in place. In so doing, it is recommended that pupils be grouped for support according to their demonstrated language competence. All pupils experience an encouraging and positive intercultural environment, including through the *Green Schools* global citizenship project and the annual, whole-school celebration of cultural diversity.