

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Buithe
Tenure, Dunleer, County Louth
Uimhir rolla: 18635T

Date of inspection: 9 November 2015



1. Introduction

A whole-school evaluation (WSE) was undertaken in Scoil Naomh Buithe in November 2015. The school, situated in Tenure, Dunleer, County Louth, caters for boys and girls from junior infants to sixth class. It operates under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. Overall attendance levels are very good.

During the WSE, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts was inspected. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream-class settings and three support-teaching settings. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **key findings**:

- The school principal and staff work collaboratively, reflectively and systematically to establish and maintain the very high standards in all curricular areas observed during this evaluation.
- The quality of teaching and learning is of the highest standard; teachers approach their work with insight, creativity and pedagogical focus, setting high standards and expectations for both themselves and their pupils. As a result, pupils work in a very enthusiastic and focused manner and their learning outcomes are very good.
- Displaying very good curricular leadership, the principal and deputy principal have established very clear curricular content and benchmarks of achievement at each class level. This has promoted certainty amongst the teachers in implementing school planning and in attaining high standards of achievement.
- A culture of continuous, varied and active reflection, guided by school self-evaluation, has been established, resulting in the creation of a vibrant and committed learning community.
- Whole-school and teachers' long-term plans are of a very high standard. There is some potential to further develop consistency in teachers' short-term planning.
- Special education provision is of a very high standard, being delivered in a reflective, systematic and structured manner to meet the clearly identified needs of pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school should examine approaches for the cross pollination of current good planning, practices and, in so doing, develop a common approach to short-term planning.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of school management is very good. The board of management works in a deliberate and calculated manner to continuously upgrade school resources and, in recent times, to manage the development and erection of a new school. Board meetings are convened regularly with a strong focus on supporting teaching and learning. The board is committed to providing a warm and inclusive school environment. Accounts are audited externally on an annual basis.
- The principal has successfully developed a vibrant and focused learning environment where standards are very good and where a committed and enthusiastic drive to providing pupils with a broad and benchmarked curriculum exists.
- The principal is very ably supported by the deputy principal and in-school management team. Meeting regularly in an informal manner, the team proactively empowers all staff to deliver high-quality education in a reflective and earnest manner. The team also provides very valuable support in the domain of school organisational matters. It is recommended that more formal meetings of the in-school management team be convened. An excellent focus on monitoring pupil attainment, and responding in a targeted manner to such attainment, is in evidence.
- The school is presented in a very colourful and stimulating manner, with a highly commendable range of the pupils' work across a range of curricular areas in evidence. A broad range of stimulating and purposeful resources is in place to support curriculum delivery. Ancillary staff members provide valuable support for the school.
- During the evaluation, the management of pupils was excellent. They presented as very focused, courteous and enthusiastic learners. Pupils' responses to the questionnaires administered during the inspection indicate that almost all pupils like school and that they feel safe in their classes. Parents' responses to questionnaires indicate that a very high proportion of them are of the opinion that teaching is good in the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of whole-school planning is very good. Working collaboratively and in a commendably reflective manner, the school staff has successfully developed very clear, progressional and comprehensive school curricular plans. The link between this whole-school planning and teachers' individual plans is particularly strong, leading to a very cohesive sense of agreed content and learning outcomes. A wide range of user-friendly and focused organisational policies is also in place.
- The overall quality of teachers' individual classroom planning is good. All teachers prepare detailed long-term and short-term plans which are very clear on the progressional development of content. A number of teachers provide detailed approaches to assessment, linkage and differentiation in their planning. It is recommended that the school examine approaches for the cross-pollination of such good practice and, in so doing, consider the development of a common approach to short-term planning. All teachers write detailed monthly reports on teaching and learning.
- The quality of school self-evaluation is very good. In particular, the school is commended for the continuous reflective manner in which actions are reviewed and on its focus on translating actions to learning outcomes.

- 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

- Tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán an-mhaith. Léiríonn na daltaí saibhreas teanga ina gcuid cainte. Cuirtear béim chuí ar theanga a mhúineadh trí mhodhanna teagaisc éagsúla a úsáid. Aithrisíonn na daltaí raon leathan de dánta, rainn agus amhráin go cumasach. Moltar a thuilleadh deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí an Ghaeilge atá foghlamtha acu a chleachtadh, ionas go mbeidh an teanga á cruthú as a stuaim féin. Tá caighdeán na léitheoireachta go han-mhaith. Scríobhann na daltaí go cumasach agus léiríonn siad tuiscint ar briathra agus codanna graméir. Chun forbairt ar a scileanna scríbhneoireachta, is féidir tuilleadh béime a chur ar scríbhneoireacht cruthaitheach.

Teaching and learning in Irish are of a very good standard. The pupils reveal a richness of language in their conversation. Appropriate emphasis is placed on teaching the language through the use of a variety of teaching methodologies. The pupils capably recite a broad range of poems, rhymes and songs. It is recommended that additional opportunities be provided for pupils to practice the Irish they have learned, in order to develop their confidence. The standard of reading is very good. Pupils write capably and they reveal understanding of verbs and grammar codes. To develop their writing skills, additional emphasis could be placed on creative writing.

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Exemplary provision is in place for the development of oral language skills, with debating, discussion and presentations forming an important component of such skill development. Some teachers have developed systems for recording language encountered incidentally across the curriculum. Very effective approaches to the teaching of reading have been developed, with very good emphasis on the development of phonological awareness, comprehension skills and reading for enjoyment. Pupils' progress in reading is very good. Very commendable provision is in place for the celebration of and engagement with poetry. To this end, pupils can recite a very wide range of poems capably. Pupils write very ably across a range of genres, with the writing process being used to very good effect. The standard of pupils' writing, richness of language, and precision of spelling and sentence structure are of a very high standard.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are well structured with commendable provision for linkage and integration in evidence. Content is well connected to the pupils' life experience. Resources and discussion are used effectively to explore and interrogate concepts. Suitable provision is in place for the development of pupils' number skills. In tandem with its school improvement plan, the school is promoting problem solving proactively and successfully. All classrooms are well presented as mathematics-rich environments.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Visual Arts is very good. High-quality provision is in place for all strands of the curriculum. A wide range of very high-quality samples of pupils' work is displayed and celebrated throughout the school. Artistic activities provide pupils with directed opportunities for guided discovery, exploration and specific skill development. Pupils are active in exploring, experimenting, expressing and enjoying themselves through Art. Very good provision is in place for looking at and responding to art and for the study of various artists and artistic approaches.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is of the highest standard; teachers approach their work with insight, creativity and pedagogical focus, setting high standards and expectations for both themselves and their pupils. Pupils work in a very enthusiastic and focused manner and their learning outcomes are very good. Observed lessons had a clear structure, underpinned by activities that clearly motivated and absorbed the pupils' interest. Pupil self-efficacy is highly developed, leading to meaningful engagement with learning tasks and purposeful identification of personal learning targets. This pupil self-evaluation is encompassed within the very good assessment practices being used by teachers.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. Using a wide range of formative and summative assessment, the special education team works collaboratively with class teachers, and other relevant professionals, to devise well-structured and focused learning programmes for identified children. Excellent leadership in terms of planning and ensuring consistency of practice is in evidence. Individual education plans clearly delineate actions and associated targets. To complement such work and to mirror actual classroom practice, all mainstream teacher classroom planning should delineate additional differentiation for pupils with identified needs.
- The school provides support across the fields of numeracy, literacy and specific learning needs. To this end, support is facilitated in-class and by withdrawal. In particular, in-class support rubrics are very well designed and delivered, with commendable use of formative assessment techniques and creative methodologies. Across all learning scenarios, learning activities are well timed, providing varied, stimulating and active learning experiences for the pupils. As a result pupils are making very good progress. The special-needs assistants provide valuable support to pupils.
- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. A wide selection of systems and procedures is in place to keep parents and the community regularly informed of school life.
- There would be merit in considering further the analysis of results from questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation and responding accordingly. For example, the school might look at response patterns from pupils that demonstrate a need to place an increased emphasis on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool. The development of an e-learning plan would further enhance the role of ICT in advancing pupils' learning outcomes. There would also be merit in examining how the school informs parents about the content of its policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management of Scoil Naomh Buithe, Tenure welcomes this extremely positive report which affirms the very high standard of work in the school. The dedication and strong work ethic of the staff, the cooperation and great support of the board of management and parents, and the enthusiasm and hard work of the pupils have been acknowledged and affirmed by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills. The board of management is particularly pleased that “the quality of teaching and learning was found to be of the highest standard” and that an “excellent focus on monitoring pupil attainment” is in evidence. The board of management and staff welcome the fact that the huge amount of time and effort they have put into developing very clear, progressive and comprehensive school curricular plans has been affirmed. The fact that the school was commended for the continuous reflective manner in which school self-evaluation is carried out is heart-warming.

The board of management was delighted with the confirmation that the management of the children was excellent and are proud that they presented as focused, courteous and enthusiastic learners, with almost all saying they liked school, were listened to and felt safe. The board especially appreciates the very high levels of satisfaction indicated by the parents and pupils in their questionnaire responses. We welcome the acknowledgement that the quality of our support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) was found to be very good as we continually strive to meet the educational and holistic needs of all our pupils.

The board congratulates the staff for having “successfully developed a vibrant and focused learning environment” and also commends the parents for their continued and significant support. We look forward to further developing and enhancing our vibrant and focused learning environment when we move to our new school building.

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