An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Bheannáin
Kilbannon, Tuam, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 18636V

Date of inspection: 28 March 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Bheannáin is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. It is located in a rural setting approximately eight kilometres from the town of Tuam, Co. Galway. It has an enrolment of sixty-seven pupils and a significant increase in enrolments is projected for the next school year. The school staff comprises a teaching principal, two mainstream teachers, one temporary learning support/resource teacher and a part-time secretary/caretaker. The school’s vision and mission statements appropriately emphasise holistic growth, the nurturing of a Christian environment and the promotion of life-long learning.

The board of management of the school 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 main strengths of the work of the school:

- Both the board of management and the parent body are active, committed and effective.
- A strong spirit of partnership and collegiality characterises the atmosphere in the school.
- The teaching staff is very open to taking on new ideas and practices and to engaging in continuing professional development.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the curricular areas evaluated is, in general, good and of a very high standard in some instances.
- Very effective provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and for those with identified special educational needs.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The school should focus on developing a strong culture of whole-school self-evaluation and review.
- The board of management should issue an annual report on the operation of the school.
- As a means of strengthening parental engagement in the development of school policy, the school should encourage the formation of a parents’ association.
- The school’s planning is in need of further development and a time-bound action plan is recommended.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and collaborate very effectively with the staff and parent body. This high level of collaboration was evident throughout the evaluation period as parents, teachers and board members worked together to complete
the final elements of a recent building project that encompassed the building of a new hall, corridor and resource room and the upgrading of the original school building.

- The board engages appropriately in the formulation, ratification and review of school policy. Some future priorities have been identified and these, along with other proposed curricular, organisational and maintenance work should be documented in the form of an action plan spanning a period of at least three years. This plan should include the issuing of an annual report on the work of the school.

- The board is cognisant of its role in managing the school’s material, physical and human resources. Teachers have access to a wide range of teaching and learning materials and up-to-date technological resources. The school has extensive play facilities and developmental work on the school grounds is ongoing. While personnel are deployed appropriately in the mainstream classrooms, it is recommended that the board ensures compliance with Departmental regulations in relation to the employment of personnel in support-teaching roles.

- The in-school management team comprises the principal and deputy principal. The principal fulfils her duties in a competent, professional and caring manner. She works very closely with the deputy principal and both are instrumental in engaging all staff members in the decision-making process. In order to effect further change, development and improvement in standards, the in-school management team should now strive to establish a formal system for sharing and reviewing classroom practice and for setting whole-school curricular targets.

- The school does not have a parents’ association. While parents are very actively involved in many of the school’s activities and a number of very effective strategies are in place to maintain communication with the parent body, the formation of a parents’ association should be considered.

- Pupils are well managed in the school. Strong emphasis is placed on developing the pupils’ self-esteem with creativity and individuality being recognised, nurtured and celebrated at all class levels. Pupils, in general, present as very mannerly, respectful and confident.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. The school plan is well developed and includes organisational policies pertinent to the school setting and clear policy statements on each curricular area. While pupil progress is regularly discussed, there is scope to strengthen the process of school self-evaluation in order to ensure full implementation of the curricular plans and appropriate continuity and progression from class to class. To support this process, teachers should provide clearer outlines of curricular content in their long-term planning and more precise statements of the expected learning outcomes for pupils in their short-term planning.

- 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 school has a very positive outlook on the teaching of Irish. The teachers speak Irish among themselves and it is regularly used as the language of classroom management. A wide range of work is undertaken at infant level and a very high level of understanding and oral competency is achieved in the middle classes. The pupils read and write with accuracy in the senior classes and they are able to use rich idioms of speech as they compose stories of their own accord. It is necessary to ensure, however, that the activities are appropriately challenging in the senior classes and that what has already been learned is regularly reviewed. Commendable use is made at each class level of drama, rhymes, poetry and music to develop the language and promote Irish culture. It would be of value now to develop the school plan further in order to indicate clearly the full extent of the work for each class level.

- English is well taught in the school. Effective use is made of the support service and of structured programmes, visual aids and technology to differentiate the programme at the various class levels. A very extensive range of good quality poetry is taught throughout the school enabling the pupils to develop a very positive attitude towards this genre of literature. Pupils are also exposed to other forms of literature including story, drama and the novel. They display a firm knowledge of letter-sound relationships and a high level of competency in spelling. They read with appropriate confidence and fluency and present their written work neatly. There is scope to develop the library facilities in the school, to co-ordinate the teaching of a cursive style of handwriting and to provide further opportunities for the pupils to experience the drafting, editing and redrafting process of writing.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is of a high standard. Differentiation is facilitated and appropriate attention is given to the language of mathematics. A range of very successful strategies is used to promote memorisation and swift recall of number facts. While a good range of mathematical materials is available, stronger emphasis could be placed on practical activity in some instances. In general, pupils are provided with ample opportunities to discuss their work; they are confident in approaching computation and problem solving and they display a sound knowledge and understanding of the work covered. The teachers are advised to review specific methodologies and to agree policy on the use of copybooks and the lay-out of work.

- The school has developed very good facilities for the teaching of Physical Education and all strands of the curriculum are covered. Appropriate attention is given to skills development and all pupils are enabled to engage in suitably challenging activities. Group work and station work are regularly organised and the activities are very well structured and paced. Very effective integration occurs with other curricular areas, particularly with Irish and Music. Basketball, hurling, football, tag-rugby, athletics,
gymnastics, swimming and dance are among the activities organised. The work in dance from junior infants onwards is particularly noteworthy. All pupils fully engage in the school’s physical education programme and display a great interest in sporting and physical activities.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. The support provided is organised to cater for pupils with learning difficulties and identified special educational needs and to facilitate differentiated programmes in literacy and numeracy in the multi-grade and dual-class settings.

- Individual and group programmes are very carefully planned, based on teachers’ observations, standardised test results, diagnostic testing and professional reports. Activities are sensitively matched to the pupils’ level of performance and teaching and learning resources are used very effectively. The learning activities are suitably challenging and provide for both success and development. Learning programmes are regularly reviewed and the levels of consultation with mainstream teachers and with parents are appropriate.

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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 staff welcome this report. They wish to acknowledge the courteous and professional manner in which the whole school evaluation was carried out. The board is happy that the dedication and conscientiousness of all parties involved in the effective school management has been acknowledged and is pleased that the high standard in Irish, English, Mathematics and Physical Education has been noted by the inspector. We look forward to the further development of Kilbannon National School to enhance the educational opportunities we provide to the community.

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 will issue an annual report on the operation of the school.
- A parents’ association has been formulated.
- A three-year action plan has been agreed at board of management level.
- The school will work towards whole-school self-evaluation and review.