Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Eoin,
Killenard,
Co. Laois
Uimhir rolla: 18641O

Date of inspection: 28 February 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Eoin is a co-educational school located in the village of Killenard, Co. Laois. The school provides for 384 pupils, some of whom reside in the parish of Portarlington while others come from outlying areas. The school staff comprises an administrative principal, fourteen mainstream teachers, two learning support/resource teachers, a part-time resource teacher, two special needs assistants, a secretary and a caretaker. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. Respect for and appreciation of the worth and giftedness of every pupil are considered core values to be fostered in the pupils. The school was extensively refurbished and extended in 2007 to provide ultra-modern, spacious accommodation. School attendance levels are very good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- There is a very strong sense of community spirit in the school and the board, parents and staff collaborate very effectively to provide a well-resourced and stimulating learning environment.
- Teaching and learning are of a high standard and particularly so in English and Physical Education.
- Pupils present their work with great care and the standard of handwriting is commendable.
- Praiseworthy attention is given to action planning, and whole-school self-evaluation and review is strongly embedded in the culture of the school.
- The work of the support team contributes significantly to the overall quality of the provision in the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- An annual report on the operation of the school should issue through the board of management.
- The school should extend the practice of providing written reports on pupil progress to encompass all classes.
- The school plan should be developed further in order to clarify the content to be covered at each class level.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted. Board members have availed of training and school affairs are managed in a very effective, efficient and professional manner. A three-year action plan guides the work of the board. The board actively
engages in policy development and review and diligently works to ensure the safety and protection of all who use the school premises. The board is very aware of the overall work of the school, of the contribution of post-holders and of the standards of teaching and learning in the school. It is very supportive of the staff’s engagement in continuous professional development. School accounts are carefully maintained and financial statements are regularly presented at board meetings. The board should now issue an annual report on the operation of the school.

- The in-school management team comprises the principal, a deputy principal, an assistant principal and five special duties teachers. The principal displays commendable leadership and management skills. She has a clear vision for the school and it is very effectively shared with the school community. The in-school management team meets regularly and it plays a very significant role in leading change and improvement, and in engaging all staff members in evaluating the quality of provision in the school. Action planning, target setting, evaluation and review are purposefully undertaken by the post holders and an atmosphere of collective responsibility prevails in the school.

- School resources are very well managed. The teaching staff and auxiliary staff work hand-in-hand to provide an organised, caring and stimulating school environment. The school building and grounds are very well maintained and the secretarial service contributes significantly to the compilation of school documents and to the ease with which they may be accessed. Teaching and learning resources, including technological resources, are plentiful and are used very effectively. However, there is scope to develop the classroom libraries and additional resources are required to further the development of mathematics-rich classroom environments.

- The school has a very active parent association that involves itself in a very broad range of activities including fundraising for the provision of resources, co-ordinating the book rental scheme and organising book fairs, information meetings and social occasions. A number of effective practices serve to facilitate communication with the parent body including the organisation of induction days and parent-teacher meetings. Written reports on pupil progress are provided to parent of pupils from 2nd class onwards and it is recommended that this practice be extended to all class levels.

- Praiseworthy attention is focussed on the management of pupils. There are high expectations for pupil behaviour and the school atmosphere fosters the development of respect for others and for their property.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- There are significant strengths in the quality of the school’s whole-school planning process. The school plan has been developed in a collaborative and collegiate manner with post-holders co-ordinating many aspects at school level. Whole-school self-evaluation and review drives the process. Priorities are identified and targets are set and reviewed at regular intervals. The board should now seek to engage the parent body more fully in the planning process.

- The school plan is utilised by the teaching staff to inform their classroom planning and practice. In general, short-term planning is well organised. Learning outcomes are very clearly stated and activities are effectively structured as a result. In a few instances of long-term planning, the content to be covered could be stated in more specific terms.

- 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

- Tá an cleachtas i dtaoibh mhúineadh na Gaeilge go maith. Baintear feidhm thairbheach as ábhair nithiúla, cluitchí, filíocht, amhráin agus ceol ionstraime chun feasacht teanga agus cultúir a chothú. Cuirtear ar chumas na ndaltaí réimeas maith scoil a thuiscint agus a úsáid. Múinteoirí cruasach breá filíocha i gceol ranganna. Leagtar béim inmholtá ar chainnt shoiléir. Déantar cumas na ndaltaí chun ceist a chur a thurasú ag an fhorbairt go sainiúil. Léann na ndaltaí go cumasach ag na rangleibhéal chúirt agus tugann siad faoi ghníomh húíochta scribhneoireachta ar bhonn rialta. Ní mór anois réimse na teanga a leathnú tríd a thuilleadh fothéamaí a aimsiú faoi na mórthéamaí teanga. Moltar freisin na téamaí a iniúchadh ar bhealach comhtháite agus b'fhéidir níos láidir leis an scríbhneoireacht pearsanta.

- The practice in relation to the teaching of Irish is good. Concrete materials, games, poetry and instrumental music are beneficially used to foster language and cultural appreciation. The pupils are enabled to understand and use a good range of vocabulary. A lovely selection of poetry is taught in many classes. Commendable emphasis is placed on clear delivery. The pupils’ ability to pose questions is developed skillfully. The pupils read competently at the appropriate class levels and they regularly engage in writing activities. The range of language should now be broadened by identifying more sub-themes under the major language themes. It is also recommended that the themes be explored in an integrated manner and that stronger emphasis be placed on personal writing.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Communication skills are very capably developed at almost all class levels with pupils engaging articulately and confidently in oral activities. Co-teaching is used very effectively to develop phonological awareness and word recognition, and to engage the pupils in appropriate early-writing activities. Pupils display firm knowledge of the sound-letter relationships and achieve a high standard in spelling. Higher-order thinking skills are conscientiously addressed and standardised test results indicate that reading is very successfully taught. The pupils are exposed to a broad range of writing experiences. The content of their work in generally of a very good standard and their handwriting merits high praise.

- The curriculum in Mathematics is taught effectively. Pupils display a good understanding of the work covered and they are positive in their attitude to Mathematics. Appropriate emphasis is placed on mathematical language at each class level. Rhymes and songs are used very beneficially in the early years to enhance understanding. Some classes are very swift at recalling number facts and the successful strategies being used should be recorded in the school plan. At most class levels pupils are enabled to engage in hands-on activity and they are provided with ample opportunities to discuss their reasoning in problem-solving situations. Assessment results are analysed in order to identify areas for future emphasis and improvement. Pupil progress in Mathematics is currently being carefully monitored.

- The quality of the provision in Physical Education is of a very high standard. Pupils develop appreciation of the importance of physical activity through engaging in a broad range of activities covering all the strands. Group work and station teaching are used
very effectively in many instances. However, there is scope to develop the practice in some cases in order to ensure maximum participation for the pupils in suitably challenging activities. The work in dance and gymnastics is particularly noteworthy. Health and safety risks and procedures relevant to Physical Education are carefully documented in the school plan.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- Standardised test results bear testimony to the effectiveness of the support provision in the school. A comprehensive school policy guides the staff in providing for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs. Very clear individual programmes of work are formulated with due regard to professional reports and in-school testing. Teaching and learning activities are carefully matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Withdrawal, in-class support and co-teaching are features of the support provision. Commendable pacing and structuring of activities was observed. Individual progress and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies are evaluated on an ongoing basis.

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