

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Aingeal
Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 18694M

Date of inspection: 3 October 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Aingeal is a girls' primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam situated in the heart of Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Currently there are twenty-three teachers on staff, including two teachers who are working in a job-share capacity. The school employs four full-time special-needs assistants, a secretary and a caretaker. At the time of the evaluation there were 372 pupils enrolled. The school is effective in providing a broad and balanced education to a diverse pupil population. This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Physical Education. 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:

- The committed board of management provides good governance of the school.
- The principal is effective in leading the hard-working and talented team of teachers.
- The quality of teaching in the school is very good.
- The quality of provision in Mathematics and Physical Education is very good.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for the pupils.
- Pupils are very well managed in a calm and orderly environment where teachers convey high expectations of good behaviour.
- The hard-working parents' association provides effective support to the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Attendance levels for a small but significant minority of pupils in the school need to be addressed.
- The school should ensure the full implementation of the literacy initiatives already in place.
- The school should review its current in-class support arrangements to ensure that the greatest possible benefit is derived from this resource.
- B'fhíu athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an bplean scoile chun an cleachtas sa Ghaeilge a threoradh sa seomra ranga. (*The school plan should be reviewed to guide the practice in Irish in the classroom.*)

3. Quality of School Management

- The well-informed board of management provides effective governance of the school. The school is well run and accounts are certified annually. The board supports the continuing professional development of the staff. In the interests of health and safety the school should review its arrangements for both traffic and parking at the school. Attendance patterns for some pupils are a cause for concern. The board should review its attendance strategy to address this issue.

- The principal very effectively creates a structured, orderly and very inclusive school environment. Her work in promoting Irish music, song-singing and dance is commendable. The principal is ably assisted by the hard-working in-school management team who show a great dedication to the school. The school should now increase the emphasis on instructional leadership. It should ensure that posts reflect current school priorities as identified in the school improvement plan. The in-school management team should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives recently undertaken.
- The school is well resourced and is fortunate in having a team of talented conscientious teachers. All classrooms are bright learning environments that enhance and celebrate pupils' learning. The school should ensure that material resources are equitably distributed across all classrooms. It is noteworthy that many teachers generously share their talents in the provision of extra-curricular activities after school. It would be of benefit to the school to develop a policy on teacher allocation to various roles within the school to further the professional development of all staff.
- The management of pupils is very effective. The school deals very successfully with a variety of diverse and challenging needs and nurtures a holistic approach to its pupils. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to participate in social and cultural events that enhance their self-esteem. Teachers gently convey high expectations of good behaviour. Responses in the pupil questionnaires indicate a very high level of pupil satisfaction with almost all pupils saying that their teachers explain things clearly and that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Very effective systems are in place to provide parents with information about their children's progress. A very supportive Parents' Association provides useful educational talks for parents as well as providing fundraising and support for events in the school. The school is encouraged to use its school website to provide parents with access to a broader range of policies, with translations to other languages where necessary. Almost all responses to parental questionnaires indicate that the parents are happy with the school and think that their child is doing well in school.
- The contribution made by all ancillary staff adds significantly to the life of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. Comprehensive administrative policies provide clarity for the day-to-day running of the school. Very detailed curricular plans provide very good guidance to classroom teachers in English and Physical Education. Aggregated data on pupils' achievement is monitored systematically and this information is shared with the board. This good work is commendable.
- The school has made good progress in school self-evaluation. Targets identified in the school improvement plan (SIP) are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed. It is recommended that all teachers take specific steps within their classrooms to ensure the full implementation of the SIP.
- A very high standard was observed in many teachers' classroom plans. All classroom plans should focus on specific curriculum objectives to be attained and relevant methodologies to be employed. Progress records should indicate more clearly the learning outcomes that have been achieved. These records could then be analysed to promote school improvement as part of the school self-evaluation process.

- Very good quality planning was observed in some of the special education settings. Good quality individual education plans have been devised. Targets were well chosen and were derived from the specialist reports available.
- 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

- Teachers manage classroom routines very capably and confidently and have well-developed teaching skills. Lessons were well paced and structured and some exemplary practice was observed. A strong work ethic has been established in the school. In order to cater more effectively for the varying learning needs of pupils, group work should be utilised in all mainstream classes, particularly for English and Mathematics.
- Baineann éagsúlacht le caighdeán an teagaisc agus le caighdeán na foghlama sa Ghaeilge. Cloítear go dílis leis an gcur chuige cumarsáideach a úsáid chun an teanga a mhúineadh, ach gan plean uileghabhálach a léiríonn go soiléir an réimse teanga atá le múineadh ag gach rang leibhéil, is deacair ardchaighdeán a bhaint amach sna ceithre scil teanga. Ní mór anois athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an bplean scoile chun leanúnachas agus forchéimniú a chinntiú ó rang go rang. B'fhiú freisin a thuilleadh áiseanna léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil agus scríbhneoireacht phearsanta a chleachtadh ar bhonn rialta.

There is variation in the quality of teaching and learning in Irish. The communicative approach is faithfully used to teach the language, but without an over-arching plan that clearly illustrates the range of language to be taught at each class level, it is difficult to achieve high standards in the four language skills. The school plan should now be reviewed to ensure continuity and progression from class to class. It would also be of benefit to provide more reading materials and to practise personal writing on a regular basis.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good overall. All teachers model good language and pupils listen attentively to them and to their peers. In some classes, attention should be given to the balance between teacher talk and the opportunities pupils have for talk and discussion. There is a need for a whole-school approach to oral language. Very good work is done in the teaching of poetry. The school has introduced a number of very worthwhile initiatives to enhance teaching and learning in reading and the benefits of these are beginning to be felt in the school.
- The quality of teaching in Mathematics is very good with skilful use of concrete materials and a strong emphasis on active learning strategies. A co-ordinated approach to teaching mathematical vocabulary is recommended. The quality of pupils' learning in Mathematics is very good as is evidenced, for example, by standardised test results and the quality of pupils' written work.
- Very effective practice was observed in Physical Education. Lessons were well managed with a suitable emphasis on skill development. A very worthwhile focus was given to talk and discussion. Pupils engaged well with the lessons provided and a high level of enjoyment was observed. The school should address the hazard posed by the chairs stacked alongside the hall to ensure that physical education lessons are conducted safely.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- There is a strong culture of respect and tolerance fostered in this inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with special educational needs. The school sensitively supports pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school should consider the introduction of a book rental scheme. The school has recently identified groups of pupils who are very strong academically and has provided more challenge for them. This good work is commendable.
- The special education teachers provide support in the mainstream classrooms. In some cases, this resource is very effectively managed. However, some of the in-class work being done at present is not as effective as it could be. The school should prepare a policy that would outline clearly the rationale for in-class support, the approaches to be used and the way in which the work is to be planned and recorded.
- In the special education classrooms skilful teaching approaches and interventions for pupils were observed. Activity based learning using specialist materials was a feature of all lessons. Meticulous record keeping ensures that progress is carefully monitored.
- The quality of provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is good. A well-resourced room is available for EAL support. The school should ensure that all classroom teachers take cognisance of the need to provide structured language lessons across the curriculum.

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 is encouraged and affirmed by the Whole School Evaluation report. The report recognises the dedication and support of the Board of Management and the Parents' Association of the school and acknowledges that the whole school community is "well informed" and that this is a "well run" school.

It also recognises the commitment of a conscientious staff and the high quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The board also welcomes the positive feedback from the parent and pupil questionnaires.

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 the entire school staff are committed to implementing the recommendations of the inspection in full.