

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Áine
New Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 19221U

Date of inspection: 9 November 2012



1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Áine is situated in Clondalkin village. More than half of the 291 pupils enrolled speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school is co-educational from infants to first class, with girls only from second to sixth class. Under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin, the school's mission statement echoes the philosophy of its founders, the Presentation Sisters. A significant number of pupils have been absent for more than twenty days over the past two years. Concerted efforts are being made to address absenteeism, and these are having a positive impact on attendance levels in the current school year. 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 **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The board of management and parents' association are well informed and are highly supportive of the work of the school.
- The school is praised for the quality of classroom and corridor displays and for the provision of stimulating learning environments.
- Teachers display well developed classroom management skills.
- Pupils participate with enthusiasm in their learning activities and are respectful, polite and courteous.
- The use of the *Aistear* programme to underpin play-based learning in the infant classes is highly commended.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that teachers differentiate their class programmes, lessons and activities more effectively in order to cater for the diverse range of learning and language needs in their classes.
- A wider range of teaching approaches and methodologies should be implemented to involve pupils to a greater degree as active agents in their learning.
- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs should be reviewed and reorganised at a whole-school level.
- A greater focus should be placed on curriculum leadership in the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets regularly and is clearly committed to the development of the school. It is commended for making great efforts to provide a safe, comfortable and stimulating learning environment for pupils. It adopts an annual budget and is kept up to date on available finances. Members play an active role in policy development.

- The principal, who was appointed within the last year, is commended for streamlining practices and procedures in the school. She has a child-centred focus, and regularly affirms and celebrates pupils' efforts. The maintenance of official school records needs some attention. The in-school management team displays a high level of commitment to the school. Members have been assigned a range of duties. It is important that the team continues the newly-introduced practice of regular meetings. Duties should be reviewed regularly to reflect the evolving needs of the school. Greater emphasis should be placed on curriculum leadership, with a focus on leading and monitoring the implementation of whole-school policies and approaches. In line with best practice, it is also recommended that team members prepare an annual action plan to guide their work, and that they submit a summary of achievements to the board of management at the end of each year.
- The school is well resourced to implement the curriculum. Corridors are visually stimulating and all classrooms provide rich print and number environments to support pupils' learning. Teachers are conscientious and dedicated. Special-needs assistants and ancillary staff carry out their duties diligently. The school's practice of using support teachers to provide cover for short-term mainstream class teacher absences should be reviewed.
- The management of relationships with the school community is good. The school should explore ways of communicating with parents for whom English is an additional language to enable them to have a greater input into their children's education. Formal parent-teacher meetings are held annually and written reports are issued to parents at the end of the school year. The parents' association is very active and parents make a considerable contribution to school life. Responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that that all parents are happy with the school.
- The management of pupils is of a high quality. They present as respectful, polite and courteous. Questionnaire responses indicate that they are all familiar with the school rules and routines and that the majority like school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning is good. Organisational plans are clear, concise and contextualised to the needs of the school. The board is advised to review its enrolment policy to ensure it complies with current legislation. The quality of recently reviewed curriculum plans is very good. Further contextualisation of the remaining plans, so that they afford greater guidance on the implementation of the curriculum's content and skills, and provide for continuity and progression in pupils' learning, is recommended.
- The school has formally engaged with the process of school self-evaluation and has developed targets for numeracy. Agreed strategies for improvement need to become further embedded in teachers' planning and practice.
- The school is developing a whole-school approach to classroom planning. The most effective planning observed was characterised by the inclusion of clear curriculum objectives, an outline of teaching and learning activities and clear provision for differentiation. This approach should be adopted by all teachers. Planning in support settings needs to be developed to ensure it is targeted, focussed, and based on identified learning needs. Planning for in-class support and team-teaching needs to outline specific learning outcomes in order to proactively address pupils' identified needs.
- 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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well structured and suitably paced. Teachers display well developed classroom management skills. Pupils engage well with assigned learning tasks and, in questionnaire responses, the majority report that they enjoy their learning. Written work is well presented and regularly monitored. While some lessons are differentiated, it is recommended that classroom teachers develop this provision and ensure appropriate challenge or support for all pupils in their learning. A whole-school approach to teaching language across the curriculum is recommended to support the large numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language. While a range of learning activities was observed during the evaluation, a wider variety of methodologies should be planned for and introduced to improve the quality of pupils' engagement. Ongoing consolidation of learning is recommended. The use of the *Aistear* programme to underpin play-based learning in the infant classes is highly commended.
- Déantar iarracht dáiríre dearcadh dearfach a chothú i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil. Baintear úsáid mhaith as raon d'fhearas. I gcuid de na ranganna cuirtear béim chuí ar dhánta, amhráin agus rannta agus ba chóir an dea-chleachtadh sin a leathnú. Léiríonn na daltaí fuaimniú maith sa léitheoireacht. Tá caighdeán sásúil á bhaint amach sa scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil, ach moltar líofacht agus cruthaitheacht a chothú a thuilleadh. Tá scoip ann chun caighdeán na Gaeilge labhartha a fheabhsú. I bhformhór na ranganna, ní mhúintear a dhóthain teanga agus ní thugtar a dhóthain deiseanna do na daltaí an teanga a úsáid i suímh éagsúla. Chun forbairt agus leanúnachas a chinntiú ar bhonn uile-scoile, moltar na téamaí sa churaclam a bheith mar bhunús don phleanáil, agus ionchur teanga nua idir fhoclóir agus struchtúir chainte a roghnú do gach téama ag gach rangleibhéal.

Honest efforts are made to promote a positive attitude towards Irish in the school. A range of resources is used well. In some classes suitable emphasis is placed on poems, songs and rhymes, and this good practice should be extended. Pupils demonstrate good pronunciation in reading. A satisfactory standard is being achieved in functional writing but further fluency and creativity are recommended. There is scope for improving the standard of spoken Irish. In the majority of classes, insufficient language is taught and opportunities for pupils to use the language in various situations are not provided. To ensure development and continuity at a whole school level, it is recommended that the themes of the curriculum are used as a basis for planning, and that new language inputs, both vocabulary and structures, are selected for every theme at every class level.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high quality. Early reading skills are taught effectively, and a programme of individualised reading is implemented throughout the school. Pupils' expressive and communicative skills are developed through process writing. Pupils engage with poetry at all class levels and have opportunities to write their own poems. The provision of discrete oral language time in all classes, alongside the implementation of a structured, curriculum-based programme of oral language, is recommended. The implementation of whole-school approaches to exploring a variety of writing genres and developing comprehension skills is also recommended.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Pupils display flexibility and confidence in their mental skills. The use of games and a variety of concrete materials, in conjunction with the explicit teaching of mathematical concepts,

contributes to pupils' understanding. Whole-school approaches to challenging the diversity of pupils' abilities, to the development of skills, and to encouraging pupils' use of mathematical language, should now be implemented.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is good. Classroom climates are positive and respectful, and rules and routines are clear and well established. Almost all parents surveyed agree that the school helps their children's social and personal development. Pupils' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are developed effectively, and strategies are taught to help them deal with issues. The use of a wider variety of subject-specific methodologies is recommended.
- Good provision is made for assessment in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' progress in play-based learning activities is systematically recorded. There is scope to use this assessment data to inform differentiation, and to extend assessment practices to other curriculum areas.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Supports for pupils with additional learning and language needs are provided by a team of six full-time and one part-time teacher. Support is provided on a withdrawal, team-teaching and in-class basis. The teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was characterised by affirming teacher-pupil relationships. Consideration should now be given to reforming the structure and delivery of additional supports for pupils by forming a special education support team. Support teachers could be assigned to particular class levels to address all additional needs of pupils in a cohesive and seamless manner. This restructuring would further facilitate communication and co-ordination between classroom teachers and the support teacher assigned to the class. The staged approach to provision should be implemented more consistently, and the use of 'classroom support' plans is recommended. The school should examine the frequency of reassignment of support teachers to ensure a balance of experience in support settings at all times.
- The school is sensitive to instances of disadvantage and supports pupils discreetly. Given the large proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language, policies on EAL and on intercultural education should be developed. A book rental scheme has been introduced and several initiatives are organised under the School Completion Programme.

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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 of Scoil Naomh Áine thanks the inspection team for their positive comments regarding the commitment and hard work of staff and the achievements and enthusiasm of pupils.

We also thank the inspection team for their affirmation of the hard work of the Board of Management and the Principal.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

We take onboard the recommendations and have already begun to implement them:

- Differentiation is directly linked to curricular objectives, specifying how the objectives are adapted to suit different needs.
- The teachers continue to use a wide range of teaching approaches and methodologies.
- Our SEN policy has been reviewed.
- The school is developing an EAL policy and an Intercultural policy.
- The committed in-school management team continues to meet monthly. The focus is on leading and monitoring the implementation of whole-school policies and approaches. The ISM team will report annually to the Board of Management.