An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Eoin Baiste
Kilbrin, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 19342J

Date of inspection: 26 October 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Eoin Baiste is a co-educational school under the patronage of the acting catholic Bishop of Cloyne. Current enrolment is 83 pupils and this allows for a teaching staff of principal, deputy principal, assistant teachers and one learning support teacher. The school building is modern and is maintained to a very high standard. 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:

- The board of management discharges its duties very effectively in line with the guidelines set out by the Department of Education and Skills.
- The school operates very closely with its community.
- The school is very well resourced and all members of staff operate in a very professional manner.
- Pupil attainment is very good which is reflective of well focused teaching throughout the school.
- The principal plays a central role in creating a successful teaching and learning environment in the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the school authorities engage more fully with parents when formulating relevant policies.
- It is recommended that, in the normal process of review, curricular plans in English and Mathematics be revisited to incorporate the principles of the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy 2011-20.
- It is recommended that the template for the monthly progress record or Cúntas Míosúil be reviewed to allow for additional focus on learning.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and plays an important part in school operations through effective guidance, high quality provision of resources and through the cultivation of fruitful linkages with parents and the local community generally. The provision of resources in support of teaching and learning is an impressive feature of the work of the board. In this regard, the provision of ICT hardware and software and its effective use a teaching tool is at an advanced stage in the school. The school's financial
affairs are carefully managed and accounts are certified annually in line with Departmental guidelines.

- The formal in-school management team is comprised of the principal and deputy principal. They take responsibility for a broad range of duties in line with Departmental guidelines which are reviewed as required by changing school circumstances.

- Parental questionnaire responses indicate the school has a very good reputation in the community and almost all parents consider it to be a well run school. Some uncertainty was apparent with regard to the extent to which the work of the board is known to parents. However, this uncertainty may relate to the confidential nature of some aspects of the work undertaken by boards of management. Most parents consider school facilities to be good while all parents state that the school provides a safe environment for their children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is well developed. Policies are carefully formulated and accurately reflect existing school practices. Responses to parent questionnaires completed in the course of the evaluation indicate a need for the school authorities to engage more fully with parents when formulating some school policies. Records of pupil achievement are carefully maintained in the school. Most parents surveyed believe that school reports give them a good picture of their children’s progress.

- In order to further develop self-evaluation as an important feature of learning within the school community, it is recommended that an annual report be provided which might include the principal teaching and learning priorities for the next school year based on existing assessment data.

- All teaching staff members complete long-term and short-term plans in respect of all curricular areas and progress is recorded on a monthly basis. In order to further improve existing practice, it is recommended that additional emphasis be placed on learning targets that have been mastered as part of the Monthly Progress Record.

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with the most recent Circular to Primary schools, 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 overall quality of teaching is very good in the school. Commendable focus is directed towards the holistic development of the child and activity and discovery methods are used frequently. All parents surveyed believe that teaching is good in the school and almost all pupils believe their lessons are interesting. In this context, it is relevant to point out the board of management and the representatives of the Parents’ Association expressed their unequivocal satisfaction with contributions of the principal and staff.
The teaching of Irish is commendably promoted throughout the school. In addition, the interest and competence of the teaching staff in the language is also commended and many examples of good practice in teaching and learning the language are noted throughout the school. New language input is fruitfully emphasised at all levels and pupil progress is clearly evident. The attention paid to promoting pupils’ communicative competence is particularly praiseworthy. The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching key reading skills at various levels is also a very positive feature of the work. Additional emphasis could now be placed on reading for pleasure. The pupils’ skills in writing are also commendably developed in the school and many examples of good quality work are available. Advice was provided regarding the use of interactive whiteboards as a means of further enhancing the quality of pupils’ independent and creative work.

English is taught productively in line with curricular requirements. The results of standardised testing (Micra-T) indicate very good standards regarding the pupils’ overall reading ability. Pupil questionnaires also indicate that the great majority of pupils feel they are doing well at reading. Oral language development is systematically promoted through a variety of well-structured language enrichment exercises and pupils, generally, express themselves with confidence. The key skills of reading are developed purposefully throughout the school. Due emphasis is placed on phonological awareness and also on phonemic and phonics skills. The pupils derive much benefit from the creation of very effective print-rich environments and from the promotion of reading for pleasure. Pupils who experience difficulty with reading are identified and supported from an early stage.

The writing process is carefully promoted on a whole-school basis. The pupils are encouraged to write in a variety of genres and many examples of such material indicate that significant progress is made throughout the school. Some fine assessment work is also a prominent feature of the overall work, especially that relating to the maintenance of pupils’ written work which in turn informs teaching strategies very effectively. The importance of current national literacy targets was discussed during the evaluation.

Mathematics is taught very competently throughout the school. The results of standardised testing (Sigma-T) suggest above average results in most of the percentile bands. Almost all parents state that the school is helping their children to progress in this key area and most pupils believe they are doing well at Mathematics. Commendable emphasis is placed on the internalisation of essential concepts on a whole-school basis. All teachers highlight the importance of discussion during the lessons and implement a clearly successful approach to problem solving. In this regard, the pace and structure of the lessons is frequently of high quality. The use of a wide range of concrete materials as well as the use of ICT ensures that the pupils are well motivated in their work.
• History is taught very purposefully in the school and all strands are carefully covered. The pupils display a keen interest in a variety of topics through the effective use of storytelling, drama, linkage with other curricular areas and also through the use of modern technology. Hence, the pupils’ interest in the world of History is successfully promoted and their skills as historians are systematically developed. In this context, the focus placed on time and chronology is particularly commendable. Many fine examples of pupils’ recorded work were noted during the evaluation.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Pupils with special educational needs are supported by one learning support teacher who is shared with another school in the locality. This support work is effective and the present caseload is regularly reviewed. A variety of appropriate teaching approaches was noted during the evaluation and early intervention and short-term initiatives are used as required.

Excellent collaboration was also noted between the support teacher, mainstream teachers and with parents. Testing occurs on a regular basis and good quality records of pupil achievement are carefully maintained. The attention paid to assessment for learning is commendable. Arrangements have been made for the teacher to attend a Maths Recovery course shortly which will also benefit the whole school staff.

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