An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Maodhóg
Ferns, County Wexford
Uimhir rolla: 19890R

Date of inspection: 20 January 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Maodhóg is a fourteen-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are 261 pupils enrolled and in the main, attendance levels are good. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The school plays a central role in the local area and enjoys the regard and support of the Ferns community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The school’s open and welcoming atmosphere and productive working relationships are promoted successfully by the principal and teaching staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The board of management and parents’ council demonstrate laudable commitment to the ongoing development of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The pupils are courteous and well behaved and present as keen and enthusiastic learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is generally good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The school’s provision for the Visual Arts is praised highly and the pupils’ completed works contribute significantly to the attractiveness of the school environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following main recommendations are made:

| • The curriculum leadership role of the in-school management team should be strengthened. |
| • The school should evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation at regular intervals through the continual development of its self-evaluation practices. |
| • The standard of the pupils’ spoken Irish should be improved through the review and development of current teaching and learning approaches. |
| • In English lessons, the pupils should experience the range of writing genres regularly, including opportunities to edit and publish their work. |
| • Individual pupils’ progress should be assessed systematically and the results used to differentiate learning activities in response to the breadth of pupils’ abilities and needs. |
| • Policy and provision for pupils with special educational needs should be developed further to ensure the full implementation of the continuum of support. |
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management demonstrates laudable commitment to the ongoing development of the school. In particular, its role in the continued improvement of the school’s building, facilities and resources is praised highly. In order to maximise the contribution of the board, it is recommended that teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters be addressed formally on a more regular basis. It is further advised that the school’s enrolment policy and code of behaviour be reviewed to take full account of legislative requirements and pertinent national guidelines.

- The principal leads and manages the school effectively. His promotion of teamwork and productive working relationships with the education partners is commended. The in-school management team contribute substantially to the efficient operation of the school. In order to optimise the potential impact of the team’s work, it is recommended that its curriculum leadership role be strengthened. Regular formal team meetings should be convened to progress identified curriculum priorities.

- The quality of the school building and grounds is excellent. In particular, the active involvement of the pupils in contributing to the attractiveness of both indoor and outdoor environments is praised. A broad range of teaching and learning resources is provided and used purposefully. While the school has added significantly to its range of ICT resources, it is recommended that the pupils’ access to and use of ICT to aid their learning be increased. Although most teachers have taught a range of classes, the further promotion of teacher mobility would be beneficial.

- The school is welcoming of parents and communicates effectively with them. The responses to the parent questionnaires confirm high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The parents’ council and parent body play a supportive role in the implementation of a range of valuable school initiatives. Opportunities to facilitate parents’ more active involvement in pertinent in-class activities should now be considered.

- The management of the pupils’ behaviour and their participation in learning is very good. They interact with their teachers and peers in a respectful and courteous manner. In the pupil questionnaires, almost all pupils report that they know the school rules, feel safe at school and get on well with other children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- While a detailed school plan and the use of a small number of self-evaluation approaches are in evidence, the quality of planning and self-evaluation is variable. In order to ensure that school planning provides adequate guidance for teaching and learning, it is advised that individual curriculum plans be reviewed cyclically. In so doing, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and pupil achievement should be evaluated formally through the continual development of school self-evaluation practices.

- Some individual teacher planning is of a good quality. It is recommended that classroom planning practices and the recording of monthly progress be improved on a schoolwide basis.
Child protection policy and procedures

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 quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is generally good. Lessons are well structured and new content is explained clearly. The teachers employ a broad range of teaching approaches and resources successfully. As a consequence, the pupils’ interest and active participation in their learning is realised. In the pupil questionnaires, most pupils report that their lessons are interesting and that they enjoy learning. The pupils’ written work is monitored closely and, in many instances, constructive feedback is provided. While a number of praiseworthy assessment modes to evaluate pupil learning are in evidence, the implementation of a consistent, whole-school approach is recommended. Individual pupil progress should be evaluated systematically and the results used to differentiate learning activities in response to the breadth of pupil abilities and needs.

- The quality of provision for English is good. There is evidence that pupils can express their views with suitable confidence and competence. The pupils display proficient reading standards, reflective of their differing ability levels. In the pupil questionnaires, a majority of the pupils state that they are doing well at reading. The school is commended for the implementation of effective shared and paired reading initiatives with parents and peers. The use of a broader range of reading texts and the further promotion of discrete reading skills would be beneficial. The quality of the pupils’ penmanship and handwriting skills is praised highly. While some fine examples of the pupils’ personal writing are in evidence, it is recommended that they experience the range of writing genres regularly, including opportunities to edit and publish their work.
• Teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high quality and most pupils surveyed report that they believe they are achieving well. Laudable features of provision include the clear explanation of new concepts, skilful teacher questioning, the effective use of manipulatives and the schoolwide promotion of mental mathematics skills. The pupils’ interest in Mathematics is generated successfully and levels of achievement are praiseworthy. The school has recently prioritised the improvement of problem-solving skills and the ongoing developments in this area are acknowledged.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts is praised highly. The teachers are particularly successful in developing the pupils’ skills and techniques, their application of the visual elements and their ability to use a wide range of media. Learning in the Visual Arts is integrated effectively with other curriculum areas and the pupils’ completed works contribute significantly to the attractiveness of the school environment. The pupils are provided with some very good opportunities to look at and respond to the works of internationally renowned artists.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Overall, the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. A suite of policies to guide SEN provision has been devised. It is now timely that these policies are reviewed and that the continuum of support is implemented fully. Individual education plans are prepared and used purposefully to guide provision. It is advised that, in all instances, learning targets are sufficiently specific and duly reflect the recommendations in externally produced reports. Lessons are well designed and implemented and teacher-pupil interactions are positive. The pupils engage effectively in the range of learning tasks and praiseworthy pupil achievement is in evidence. In monitoring individual pupil progress, it is recommended that the attainment of discrete learning targets is assessed and recorded more systematically.

Published June 2011
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 are pleased with our WSE report and wish to thank the Department Inspectors for their co-operation, courtesy and effectiveness in preparing this report.

We are delighted to see mentioned that our school is a happy place of work for the pupils and staff and that our school enjoys the regard and support of the Ferns community. The strong co-operation between the Board of Management and the Parents’ Council adds to the good quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Praised highly in the report is the high quality of structural and teaching resources including ICT.

Most pleasing in the report is the confirmation that the management of the pupils’ behaviour is very good and that children feel safe in our school.

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 in-school management teams have been strengthened and as a result of the Croke Park Agreement, these teams meet regularly during after-school hours.

Children’s access to computers has been increased with the introduction of a laptop trolley with 20 laptops, which can be brought from class to class through the school.

The staff will continue to refine assessment procedures in order to continually evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

The main recommendations in Gaeilge, Maths and English are noted and will be high priority during staff development days and staff meetings.