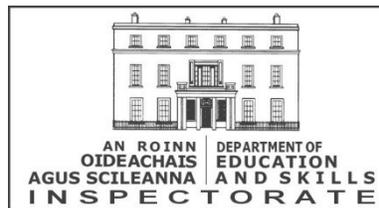


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil an Chroí Naofa
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla: 20042E

Date of inspection: 17 April 2015



1. Introduction

Scoil an Chroí Naofa operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clonfert and is one of three primary schools located in the town of Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. It is a co-educational school with pupils from distinct ethnic groups, different nationalities and diverse cultural backgrounds. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) (Urban – Band 1). 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.

A whole-school evaluation was carried out in Scoil an Chroí Naofa in April 2015. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an enrolment of 286 pupils. The staff comprised an administrative principal, thirteen mainstream teachers, thirteen support teachers (four of whom were job-sharing), three special class teachers, a home-school community liaison officer, six special needs assistants, a secretary and a caretaker. This whole-school evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Science.

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 supports an inclusive school ethos and staff members are very positively disposed to providing for the needs of all pupils.
- The parents' association is working diligently to engage parents actively in school life.
- Teachers provide a wide range of interesting and enjoyable learning experiences for the pupils.
- The pupils are very well managed and are commended for their willingness to engage wholeheartedly in classroom activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should agree and record at the end of meetings the information to be disseminated among the school community.
- The board should issue summaries of the school self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan to the school community.
- The school plans in Irish and Science should be developed further.
- There is further potential to enhance and extend the use of differentiated strategies to progress pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

3. Quality of School Management

- The overall quality of school management is good. The board of management meets regularly and minutes of meetings are carefully maintained. A financial report and a statement on child protection form part of the agenda for each board meeting. School accounts have been certified for the last three years. In the interest of openness and

transparency, the board should agree and record, at the end of each meeting, the information to be disseminated among the school community.

- The in-school management team comprises the principal, deputy principal, an assistant principal and seven special duties teachers. The principal was appointed in January 2014 and is participating in the Misneach programme for new principals. In-school management meetings are convened on a monthly basis. As a means of monitoring the impact of these meetings, a record should be maintained of the decisions made and the actions carried out. Consideration should be given to co-ordinating specific aspects of the curricular provision in the school in order to ensure appropriate progression and continuity in the teaching and learning. Duties attached to the posts of responsibility span a broad range of curricular, organisational and pastoral activities. These duties should be reviewed regularly in line with the changing needs of the school.
- Successive boards of management have worked diligently to maintain and develop the school premises. The school is located on a split site with classrooms and auxiliary rooms located on opposite sides of a busy street. This necessitates staff and pupils crossing the road at various times during the school day. Clear safety and security procedures are in place while the board awaits movement on an application for a new school.
- The school is well resourced with teaching and learning materials. Further resources are required to develop reading skills in Irish and to support the creation of mathematics-rich classroom environments.
- The board is very cognisant of the value of engagement with parents. The home-school-community liaison officer organises very successful events aimed at establishing and maintaining links with parents. Effective strategies are in place to keep parents informed of school events and of their children's progress. The school has a new parents' association with a vibrant, enthusiastic committee. The committee is working earnestly to involve parents actively in the life of the school. A number of initiatives have commenced very successfully. To strengthen relationships further, parent representatives on the board of management should attend parent association committee meetings.
- The pupils are very well managed and respectful relationships are nurtured. The *Incredible Years Programme*, aimed at promoting self-regulation and positive behaviour reinforcement, is implemented at infant level. Pupil attendance is closely monitored. The principal, the home-school-community liaison officer and the local education welfare officer meet regularly to design and implement targeted strategies to enhance attendance and punctuality.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Valuable work is underway as part of the school planning and self-evaluation process. A number of policy documents are currently under review, including the school's enrolment policy. Some school policies are displayed on the school website. While parents are appropriately involved in the school self-evaluation process, there is scope to involve parents more actively in the formulation and review of school policy.
- A review of the first year of the school's three-year improvement plan for literacy has taken place. Elements that are working well have been identified as well as an additional need to focus attention on oral language skills. It is recommended that new practices already established to enhance pupils' writing skills should continue. The plan should be adapted, and time parameters adjusted, to incorporate additional whole-school strategies

to develop oral language competencies. The board should ensure that summaries of the school self-evaluation report and improvement plan are issued to the school community.

- The school plan in English and Mathematics provides very clear guidance in relation to teaching methodologies and the content to be covered at each class level. Similar attention should now be given to outlining the programmes in Irish and Science. A review of the language of common procedures in Mathematics is required to ensure correct usage of the language for subtraction.
- The overall quality of teacher planning is good. There is a need to clarify programme content and methodologies in some long-term plans, particularly in relation to the teaching of Irish. There is also a need to ensure that short-term objectives are stated in terms of the learning outcomes for the pupils. Very clear learning programmes are devised for pupils with learning difficulties or special educational needs. To aid assessment of progress, the baseline from which these programmes commence should be carefully outlined.
- 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 is good. Teachers successfully foster interest in and enjoyment of learning. Learning activities, for the most part, are effectively linked and integrated. Pupils' written work is very carefully monitored at some class levels. In other instances, written work could be corrected in a more meaningful manner and greater emphasis could be placed on guiding pupils to write and layout their work neatly. Pupils are commended for the wholehearted manner in which they engage in classroom activities. It is praiseworthy that the school has a strong mentoring programme in place whereby newly appointed teachers are supported by experienced mentors.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán. Sna ranganna ina mbaintear feidhm sciliúil as an gcur chuige cumarsáideach, gnóthaíonn na daltaí tuiscint ar réimse maith foclóra. Múintear cnuasach deas dánta agus amhrán i gcuid mhaith de na ranganna. Cuirtear ar chumas na ndaltaí ag rangleibhéil áirithe foinn Ghaelacha a sheinm go deas binn ar an bhfliúit Shasanach. I gcásanna áirithe, tá gá le húsáid mhodh an aistriúcháin a íoslaghdú. Ní mór freisin dánta agus amhráin ar chaighdeán cuí a mhúineadh agus clár cinnte éisteachta agus labhartha a chlúdach mar réamhullmhúchán don léitheoireacht agus don scríbhneoireacht. Is inmholta, i roinnt ranganna, faoi mar a chuirtear ar chumas na ndaltaí ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt ag baint úsáide as réimse cuí briathra. Ba chóir an cleachtas luachmhar seo a leathnú ar fud na scoile.

The overall quality of teaching in Irish is good. In classes where the communicative approach is used skilfully, pupils develop understanding of a good range of vocabulary. A nice collection of poems and songs is taught in a good number of classes. Pupils at specific class levels are enabled to play Irish tunes very sweetly on the recorder. In some instances there is a need to minimise the use of the translation method, to teach poems and songs of an appropriate standard, and to cover a clear programme of listening and speaking as preparation for reading and writing. It is praiseworthy in some classes how pupils are enabled to pose and answer questions using an appropriate range of verbs. This valuable practice should be extended throughout the school.

- There is evidence of some very effective practice in the development of English literacy skills. Pupil achievement, however, varies significantly and this poses a whole-school

challenge in relation to differentiating the teaching and learning at each individual class level. In many classes there is a noticeable focus on language development with suitable approaches being used to extend vocabulary and enhance oral fluency. This focus on language development should extend into other curricular areas with components of language teaching being incorporated into the planning and presentation of all lessons. Good quality poetry is explored throughout the school and poetry recitation is of a high standard. Pupils are encouraged to read with clarity and expression, and most read well at their own level. Writing activities, in general, are well structured and pupils have opportunities to explore the different genres of writing.

- Pupil acquire good understanding of the concepts covered in Mathematics. Appropriate emphasis is placed on oral work and on motivating pupils to discuss and explain their reasoning. Games, pair work, collaborative work, mixed ability grouping and ability grouping are among the approaches used to progress learning. Pupils engage in practical activity and experience some very well structured, effectively paced and appropriately differentiated teaching. It would be beneficial to revise the language of common procedures regularly with the pupils. It is recommended that the organisation of group work at some class levels be reviewed so that the potential for development is the same for all pupils.
- Pupils experience a good range of activities in Science. They are provided with opportunities to design and make, to set up fair tests, to work collaboratively, to discuss their thinking and to share their findings. An appropriate balance between knowledge acquisition and skills development is clearly evident in a number of classes. Active engagement in learning is facilitated. Pupils are involved in a number of local and national initiatives including *SCRATCH* programming and the *Lego Junior League*.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is good. This is an inclusive school that welcomes pupils with differing needs. The support provision encompasses learning support, language support for pupils with English as an additional language and resource teaching for pupils with identified special educational needs. There are two special classes for pupils with speech and language difficulties, and a special class for pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- The staff has a strong skills set to support the pupils. There is a high level of engagement in professional development providing teachers and special needs assistants with the knowledge and understanding of how specific programmes and approaches can be implemented to address various educational, care and pastoral needs.
- The support team works in collaboration with mainstream class teachers to organise early intervention programmes, reading and maths-recovery sessions, in-class support, withdrawal of pupils and integration of pupils into mainstream settings. Some very focussed and effective teaching occurs including individual work, group work and station-teaching. There is scope for further development of co-teaching approaches in the school to enhance literacy and numeracy skills. There is also a need to ensure that grouping arrangements facilitate age-appropriate integration of special class pupils into mainstream settings.
- The school has established strong links with outside agencies, second levels schools and other primary schools. Speech and language therapists work closely with school personnel and provide in-school services to specific pupils. The school places particular emphasis on developing interest in the Arts. A programme of instrumental music was provided recently in the school, in association with *Galway Rural Development* and *Galway Music Partnership*. The school participates in the *School Completion Programme*

and the *School Meals Programme*. Pupils derive great benefit from the many activities that are organised to enrich their life at school, including a very successful *Breakfast Club*.

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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

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 now disseminate an agreed report to the school community following meetings.
- Summaries of the school self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan have been issued to the school community.
- The school has been included on the list for New School Buildings and is due to go to construction in October 2016.
- Review of Irish resources will be in conjunction with New Language Curriculum implementation.