1. Introduction

Bunscoil Bóthar na Naomh is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. There are 298 pupils enrolled and the attendance of most pupils is very good. 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 is very focused on providing a high quality educational experience for the pupils.
- The acting principal demonstrates exemplary instructional leadership. His educational vision is reflected in his sustained emphasis on improving the learning outcomes for pupils.
- There are high levels of collaboration and co-operation between the members of the in-school management team and they carry out their duties purposefully and with dedication.
- The management of pupils is excellent.
- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is very good.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics and Science is highly commendable.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and an inclusive environment has been created successfully in the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Teachers’ classroom planning and monthly progress reports should be reviewed to improve clarity regarding learning intentions and the outcomes achieved by pupils.
- Sa Ghaeilge, ba chóir a thuilleadh béime a leagadh ar scileanna fíor-chumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. In Irish, it is advised that extra emphasis is placed on the development of the pupils’ real communication skills.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is excellent. Members share their individual skills and educational expertise purposefully to support the development of the school. The board considers teaching, learning and pupil achievement matters regularly. It is very focused on providing a high quality educational experience for the pupils and attends carefully to their pastoral care needs. It is now advised that the board issue an annual report on the work of the school.
• The acting principal demonstrates exemplary instructional leadership. He maintains a high presence in all classrooms and he actively empowers the teachers and successfully motivates the pupils. His educational vision is reflected in his sustained emphasis on improving the learning outcomes for pupils. There are high levels of collaboration and cooperation between the members of the in-school management team. Their duties are carried out purposefully and with dedication.

• Individual teachers’ skills and abilities are employed to positive effect and they are commended for their regular engagement in continuing professional development. The ancillary staff includes four special needs assistants, a secretary and a cleaner/caretaker. All perform their duties to a high standard and contribute significantly to the effective running of the school. A large building extension has been completed recently and this significantly enhances the learning environment for the pupils. All members of the school community are highly praised for their hard work and for their commitment to this project. The management of resources is of a high standard and the range used to support teaching and learning is impressive.

• The quality of communication between parents and the school is good and the parents’ association is committed to supporting the school. While the results of the parent questionnaires indicate that almost all parents are happy with the school, the responses also show that there is scope to improve arrangements that seek the views of parents on school matters.

• The management of the pupils excellent and is due to the communication of high expectations regarding behaviour and the respectful manner in which teachers and pupils interact. The involvement of the pupils in relevant decision-making through the work of Green Schools committee is highly praised.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is very good. In particular, the school is commended for its capacity to identify areas of need, to action plan to address these priorities and to successfully evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

• While individual teachers engage in long-term and short-term planning and report on progress on a monthly basis, a review of existing practices is advised. In so doing, particular attention should be paid to ensuring greater clarity regarding the learning intentions for pupils and the actual outcomes achieved.

• 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 quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commendable. Lessons are well structured and delivered effectively. A variety of teaching approaches is employed successfully and ICT is used to good effect. The responses to the pupil questionnaires indicate that there is scope to increase opportunities for the pupils to work collaboratively and to increase their usage of ICT. The teachers communicate high expectations with regard to effort and achievement. A positive working environment exists and the pupils’
willingness to engage and co-operate with their teachers and peers is readily apparent. The questionnaires issued to parents indicate very good levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching.

- The pupils’ learning is monitored carefully using an appropriate variety of assessment strategies, with particularly commendable practice at infant level. Individual pupil progress is evaluated regularly and standardised test results are examined carefully. The teachers demonstrate a praiseworthy understanding of the learning strengths and needs of their pupils. In order to fully accommodate the range of pupil ability levels, including those of accelerated learners, it is advised that differentiation practices be developed further.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cothaitear dearadh dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge tríd an scoil. Úsáideann na hoidí modhanna cruthaitheacha chun teanga nua a mhúineadh agus curtear bém inmholta ar ról-imirig agus ar obair bheithe. Ba chóir ann anois a thuilleadh béime a leagadh ar scileanna fíor-chumarsáide na ndaltaí a fháil a chotháil agus a mhúineadh go córasach. Dírítear aird chuí ar mhúineadh na léitheoireachta agus léann formhór na ndaltaí go caighdeán maith. Moltar anois úsáid a bhreis a bhaint as scéalacht agus agus a fhíor leachtaireacht. Tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach sa scribhneoireacht.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A positive attitude to Irish is cultivated throughout the school. The teachers use creative methodologies to teach new language and there is praiseworthy emphasis on role-play and pair work. It is now advised that extra emphasis is placed on the development of real communication skills, and the language exemplars should be taught and used systematically. Appropriate attention is directed to the teaching of reading and the majority of pupils read to a good standard. The greater use of story and real books is now advised. A good standard is being achieved in written work.

- In English, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Oral language skills are developed effectively through structured activities in most classes. Reading for pleasure is promoted successfully and novels and supplementary readers are used purposefully throughout the school. Most pupils read with appropriate fluency and accuracy and the results of the pupil questionnaires indicate that most consider that they are doing well at reading. In striving for further improvements in literacy standards, it is recommended that the timeframe for the introduction of formal reading to infant pupils is reviewed to allow for the implementation of a broader pre-reading programme. The quality of the pupils’ writing at each class level is praiseworthy. However, a whole-school approach to the writing process would further enhance this quality.

- The quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good, with some excellent practice and impressive learning outcomes noted. Talk and discussion, investigation and prediction feature prominently in lessons, along with the consistent consolidation of previous learning. As a consequence, commendable levels of pupil achievement are in evidence and most pupils consider that they are doing well at Maths. In continuing to promote pupil progress, sustained schoolwide attention to developing mental mathematics competence and problem-solving skills would be beneficial. Further exploration of the everyday application of mathematical concepts should also be promoted.

- In Science, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. The pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to work scientifically. They demonstrate increased competence in the use of scientific language as they progress through the school. Learning is applied competently while the pupils engage in structured exploration and investigation activities. The pupils benefit from participation in organised field trips,
from the expertise of guest speakers and from the science facilities available in the Lismore Heritage Centre. The development of the school garden and participation in *Discover Primary Science* and *Incredible Edibles* is of further benefit to the pupils. The school is deserving of particular praise for its promotion of environmental awareness and care practices and the achievement of three flags to date is highly commendable.

6. **Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and an inclusive environment has been created successfully in the school. There is well-developed communication between support teachers and class teachers and pertinent information relating to pupil learning needs is shared purposefully. The staged approach to support is very well developed and this allows for the successful early identification of learning needs and for appropriate supports to be put in place.

- The support teachers present engaging, well-paced and well-resourced lessons that are tailored to the pupils’ individual needs. Targets in individualised programmes are devised collaboratively and reviewed regularly. The withdrawal settings are well organised and aesthetically pleasing learning environments. The further development of current in-class support models is advised.

*Published April 2012*
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 Bunscoil Bhóthar na Naomh wishes to thank the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate for the professional and constructive manner in which they carried out their evaluation.

We also welcome their recommendations both in the areas of management and teaching.

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

Implementation of their recommendations has commenced and will continue on a phased basis.