Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa
Bettystown, County Meath
Uimhir rolla: 20216L

Date of inspection: 07 November 2014
1. Introduction

Scoil Oílibhéir Naofa is a junior school catering for boys and girls in classes from junior infants to second class. It also has a class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and an early intervention pre-school class for pupils with ASD. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The current enrolment is 444 pupils. Attendance levels are very good. During the whole-school evaluation provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Physical Education was inspected. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and eight support teaching settings. 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 school's board of management has successfully developed an inclusive school environment.
- The school principal and in-school management team undertake their work in a very enthusiastic, organised and purposeful manner.
- School staff works and plans in a concerted and collaborative manner to provide pupils with a broad learning experience.
- Pupils display ability in English reading and in Mathematics.
- Lessons are delivered in an engaging manner, serving to motivate pupil interest and involvement.
- The management of pupils is of a very good quality. They engage enthusiastically in learning activities, completing tasks and assignments with pride and rigour.
- Support for pupils is provided in a nurturing and affirming manner.
- A strong commitment to inclusion underpins provision for pupils with ASD.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The further tracking of pupil progress and the wider use of formative assessment methods would further enhance pupil learning outcomes.
- *Ní móir an Ghaeilge neamhfoirmiúil a úsáid níos rialta ar bhonn uile scoile agus deiseanna breise a thabhairt do na daltaí abairtí iomlána a chumadh agus a úsáid chun a scileanna teanga a thabhairt a thuilleadh.* (To further develop pupils' language skills Irish should be used incidentally more regularly on a whole-school basis and additional opportunities should be provided for pupils to construct and use full sentences).
- It is recommended that financial contributions from parents towards tuition for co-curricular activities during school time should be discontinued.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The school is managed by a well-organised and committed board of management. School accounts are audited annually. Meetings are held regularly. The board manages school resources in a careful manner, successfully developing a very inclusive and nurturing school environment. It is recommended that financial contributions, from parents towards tuition for co-curricular activities during school time, be discontinued.

- The school is led by a very organised and enthusiastic school principal who effectively encourages and empowers staff to engage with a range of educational initiatives. She has successfully developed the school as a very ordered, inclusive and nurturing learning environment where the uniqueness and individuality of each child is both recognised and cherished. The principal receives very good support from a committed in-school management team. They undertake their duties in a purposeful and systematic manner.

- The overall quality of the management of resources is high. The school is presented in a very colourful, neat and stimulating manner. A good selection of stimulating and interactive resources is available. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively across a range of learning scenarios. Staff members display very high levels of commitment to the school. Teachers regularly undertake professional development courses and share their learning with colleagues. Ancillary staff provides significant support for the school.

- The management of pupils is of a very high quality. They are very happy in their learning. Their behaviour during the inspection was excellent. Teachers and school staff interact with pupils in a very warm, affirming and respectful manner.

- The school regularly communicates with the broader community, using a range of approaches. It benefits from the valuable support of its parents’ association. The responses to the parent questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate that a very high proportion of parents are happy with the school.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of school planning is very good. Comprehensive curricular policies have been devised, which are clear, focused and practical in design. A wide range of user-friendly and detailed organisational policies have also been developed. As part of the school self-evaluation process, the school has collected data from a range of sources, which includes parents, pupils and staff members. School improvement plans for the areas of numeracy and literacy have been devised. These plans provide a range of concrete actions for curriculum development. It is recommended that the school’s behaviour policy be reviewed to make more detailed reference to procedures for suspension and expulsion. The enrolment policy should also be reviewed to clarify criteria and procedures for enrolling pupils with special educational needs.

- The overall quality of teachers’ planning is very good. All teachers devise long and short-term plans which are comprehensive, outlining content to be covered in a progressive and sequential manner. Detailed monthly reports are also completed.

- 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 standard of teaching and learning in Irish is high. A broad range of resources, drama and various activities are used effectively to teach new vocabulary. Commendable emphasis is placed on language games, singing, rhymes and poetry. The pupils derive great enjoyment from lessons and partake enthusiastically in them. They display ability in the language, especially in the use of nouns. Additional opportunities should be provided to pupils to construct and use full sentences. Incidental Irish is used regularly in some of the classes. Additional emphasis should be placed on this aspect of the language. Reading and writing skills are developed progressively. Sometimes, teachers make very good use of Irish to teach other subjects. In certain instances, more emphasis should be placed on pair-work to practice and develop new language.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are presented in a lively, engaging manner. Very good emphasis is placed on the development of mathematical language and on mental arithmetic. Pupils are actively involved in lessons, with ICT and concrete resources being used to very good effect. Collaborative learning is a feature of all lessons. Good provision is in place for linkage. Overall, the school is well presented as a maths-rich environment. In some cases, greater provision for problem solving and the connection of mathematical content to the pupils’ life experiences should be considered. Good differentiation practices are in operation. In some cases, additional provision for more able pupils should be considered.

- The standard of teaching and learning in English is very good. A structured approach to developing pupils’ reading skills is in place, with a very good focus on the development of phonological awareness and word-attack skills. Pupils read with commendable fluency and expression. While there is good provision for the development of comprehension in some settings, a whole-school approach to the promotion of discrete comprehension skills should now be considered. In a few instances, there is potential for providing pupils with additional differentiated reading material. Pupils’ ability to write in a range of genres is fostered methodically. Structured opportunities are provided for the development of oral language skills. Across the school, pupils recite a very good range of poetry and rhyme with appropriate expression.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education is very good. Lessons are well structured and incorporate a good balance between physical activity and skill development. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety. Pupil engagement and active participation in organised activities are very high. They are active in exploring, experimenting and expressing themselves through various games and activities. Praiseworthy integration with other subject areas such as Gaeilge and Mathematics was evident during the evaluation.

- Teachers are very enthusiastic about their work, carefully preparing lessons and delivering them in a lively and engaging manner. Commendable exemplars of teacher-
designed resources and activities are in evidence. Strong emphasis is placed on active learning experiences for the pupils, with hands-on activities and cooperative learning being used to good effect. Pupils enjoy lessons, applying themselves to tasks, discussion and written activities with eagerness and focus. Commendable emphasis is placed on affirming pupils’ efforts. Overall, good differentiation practices are in operation. Pupils’ written work is well monitored and presented to a high standard. The wider tracking of pupil progress and the broader use of formative assessment methods would further enhance pupils’ learning outcomes.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is high. Pupils are identified for support using a broad range of assessment techniques. Collaborative planning with classroom teachers guides individual teacher preparation. Teachers prepare very carefully for interventions, with commendable emphasis on the design of purposeful activities. While plans clearly outline learning activities, there is potential for targets to be more specific and measurable in some instances. Individual education plans (IEPs) are constructed in consultation with parents. The school should endeavour to construct IEPs earlier in the school year. Overall, good assessment practices are in operation.

- The school is proactive in engaging with new programmes and initiatives aimed at addressing the unique needs of pupils with special educational needs. The regular review of such programmes and initiatives and the associated allocation of resources is recommended.

- Structured approaches to providing support have been carefully developed, combining both in-class and withdrawal models. Overall, interventions are purposeful and well organised. Interactions observed were very affirming. Pupils engage in activities in a focused and enthusiastic manner and clearly derive benefit and enjoyment from the support.

- Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is provided in a directed and focused manner. Careful procedures are in place to identify pupils in need of support. Well-structured content and activities coupled with regular collaboration with classroom teachers ensure the progressive development of pupils’ language skills. The wider use of continuous assessment would further enhance provision.

- A strong commitment to inclusion underpins provision for pupils with ASD. Overall, planning is of a good standard. The greater use of time-bound targets and success criteria is recommended. Activities and work schedules are well structured with a good focus on the development of social, communication and life skills. Parents are regularly consulted. A good balance between individual and group work provides opportunities for the promotion of socialisation skills. In some instances, the rationale for combining ASD classes should be reviewed to ensure activities are appropriately differentiated.

- A number of effective approaches and methodologies are used which include visual schedules, individual timetables, work routines and social stories. In some instances, very high quality use of role play, sensory stimulation and concrete resources serve to reinforce lesson content and promote pupil understanding of self-management and appropriate behaviour. Wider use of such approaches should be considered.
• Special needs assistants are purposefully deployed and ably support the work of the classroom teachers.
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 welcomes this very positive report. We are pleased that the report’s findings accurately reflect the professionalism of the staff and the children’s achievements. We appreciate the input of the Inspectorate and acknowledge its position as a partner in delivering quality teaching and learning.

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 has discussed and accepts the recommendations made in the report. Many of these recommendations have been acted upon since the evaluation and others have been prioritised for implementation in the current and next school year 2015 - 2016.