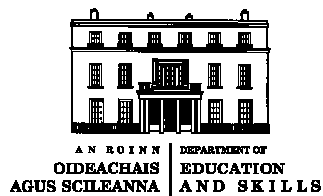


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naithí, Ballinteer,
Co. Dublin
Roll Number: 19473U

Date of inspection: 6 November 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Naithí is a co-educational, all-Irish primary school which operates under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. The teaching staff has undergone significant change over the past two years. At present there are 234 pupils enrolled and it is clear from the enrolment records that the level of attendance of pupils at the school is very good. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- Irish is diligently and consciously promoted as the main language of communication in the school.
- The board of management functions professionally and the maintenance and development of all-Irish education is central to its work.
- The principal administers the school effectively and staff work diligently for the betterment of pupils.
- Comhlacht Naithí, the parents' committee, fully supports the work of the school.
- The good behaviour and dedication of pupils to learning is acknowledged.
- A high standard of attainment in Irish, English and Mathematics is reached.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The Board should deploy teachers in accordance with the staff allocation and appointment schedule as per Circular 0013/2013
- It is recommended that the role played by the in-school management team be enhanced with an emphasis on curricular leadership. It would also be worthwhile developing the leadership abilities of all staff members.
- It is recommended that the writing competence of pupils in both Irish and English be developed and that process writing be promoted.
- It is recommended that more varied teaching approaches be practised, including group work, differentiation strategies, in-class and co-operative teaching. It is also necessary that a more challenging learning programme be designed and implemented.

3. Quality of School Management

- The Board functions conscientiously in order to ensure that an effective programme of immersion education is available to the pupils. The chairperson and board members play active roles in the management of the school. Board meetings are regularly convened and minutes are carefully maintained. It is recommended that a statement of the Board's income and expenditure be presented at all meetings with a view to receiving members' approval. It would be beneficial if the Board was to issue an annual report on the school's activities in order to keep interested parties informed. It would be of assistance, also, if additional strategies were designed to further enhance the participation of parents, particularly with regard to policy development. Not all teachers on staff are deployed in accordance with the staff allocation schedule. It is therefore recommended to the board that redeployment should be carried out in accordance with Circular 0013/2013.
- The principal teacher effectively administers curricular matters and day-to-day activities. She ensures that Irish is promoted as the language of communication of the school. She works diligently and succeeds in fostering a culture of honest endeavour. The in-school management team greatly assists in the development of the school. They ably fulfil the obligations attached to their posts of responsibility. In order to build on the curricular leadership already being developed, it would be beneficial for the team to assume greater responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the school plan. Considering that many changes in staffing have taken place in recent years, it is now recommended that structures be put in place to foster the leadership abilities of teachers.
- The school is located in a well-appointed building. The numerous resources available are well organised. Technology is utilised as a teaching aid but it is now recommended that greater use be made of computers in order to enhance students' learning. While there is an extensive range of books available in the school, it is necessary that they be distributed among classrooms as a support for reading development.
- It is acknowledged that the school has created a place for itself as an all-Irish education service within the local community. A committee of parents, known as Comhlacht Naithí, with strong links to the board, works actively and co-operatively. They judiciously organise various events and provide practical help during school events. The system in place for cultivating good communication among parents is commendable. Feedback from questionnaires, distributed to parents during the evaluation, indicated that they were more than satisfied with the standard of education in the school.
- The staff creates a happy learning environment in which students are safe and content. They are encouraged to utilise their talents to their full potential in order to strive for excellence. A good collaborative atmosphere is apparent among pupils and teachers. They express a high level of pride in and loyalty to the school and the Irish language. With a view to giving pupils a more central role, it would be worthwhile establishing a student council.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- In general, the quality of planning is good. It is understood that policies were developed in collaboration with the relevant partners over a period of time. The curricular plans were

prepared co-operatively and carefully designed. It is commendable that plans were drawn up to identify the school's priorities and to guide review of policies.

- A very creditable beginning has been made to the development of school self-evaluation processes. Clear objectives and specific activities are included so as to enhance the accuracy and richness of Irish throughout the school. The use of school self-evaluation to specify and clarify the content of curricular policies is advised. With this in mind, it is recommended that evidence arising from various sources be exploited and that an agreed monitoring system be implemented on a whole-school basis.
- Much effort is expended on the provision of class planning but a simpler and more effective agreed system should be designed for short-term planning and for the recording of progress in learning. Learning outcomes should be recorded accurately in order to confirm the analysis and review of curriculum implementation. The effectiveness of planning would be enhanced if it contained references to teaching and learning objectives, a variety of activities and to assessment.
- 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 requirement of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The teaching and learning of Irish in the school is of a high standard. Staff is to be congratulated on the manner in which they have succeeded in retaining Irish as the main language of communication in the schoolyard and in the school environment. The speaking competence of pupils is being developed progressively, with a particular emphasis on ensuring accuracy and richness of vocabulary. The teaching of grammar in a formal way to senior classes constitutes a valuable approach. Pupils read class textbooks with understanding, meaning and fluency. In order to enrich the reading experience the organisation of reading could be developed by making available a more extensive range of reading activities and different genres of texts. Some creditable samples of pupils' writing are displayed. It is recommended that the teaching of writing should be undertaken in a systematic way so as to enable pupils to engage regularly in free writing from the early years onwards. In order to bring this about, greater use should be made of process writing.
- It is evident from standardised test results in English reading and from engagement with pupils that reading standards in the school are very high. Pupils speak confidently and express themselves competently and have successfully acquired a range of oral language skills. To ensure that vocabulary, word study and language proficiency are appropriately developed and extended pupils should be exposed to a wider variety of reading material in the middle and senior classes. The further development of a more differentiated approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school is recommended. Teachers are aware that there is scope to develop further the quality of English writing throughout the school. A whole-school focused approach to the teaching of personal writing is therefore recommended.
- The attainments of pupils in Mathematics are very high. Productive use is made of concrete materials and of active teaching methods in order to consolidate concepts. The language of Mathematics is systematically taught. Mathematics is skilfully integrated with other curricular areas. With a view to enhancing this good work, it is advisable that opportunities for discussion and reasoning should be provided in order to enhance understanding. By way of developing oral Maths, it would be worthwhile placing greater emphasis on problem solving. The good practice initiated in co-operative teaching is acknowledged and is

primarily directed towards the learning needs of pupils. It is recommended that this approach be extended throughout the school and that challenging activities be prepared particularly for pupils who are very competent in Mathematics.

- The quality of provision in Physical Education is very good. The classes are conducted in a systematic way and pupils derive both benefit and pleasure from what they learn. The participation of pupils is prudently encouraged and their safety is carefully assured throughout lessons. The use of available resources supports the implementation of the programme. The afternoon sports programme enhances their skills as do swimming lessons given locally. It must be ensured that the various strands of the Physical Education programme be completed within the appropriate period of time.
- The range of stimulating teaching methods practised by teachers, as well as effective questioning and beneficial use of teaching aids, all enhance the quality of learning. Teachers have created attractive learning environments for their pupils. It is recommended that a better balance be achieved between differentiated group work and class teaching, in order to address the learning needs of pupils more fully. Pupils should also be more challenged in their learning. Pupils have confirmed, by questionnaires circulated during the evaluation, that explanations are clear, that their work is corrected regularly and that they are given guidance as to how their work might be improved.
- Effective use is made of a variety of assessment methods. With a view to building on this work, it is recommended that emphasis be placed on assessment for learning. More specific strategies should be identified and implemented in order to assess the various elements of the curriculum. It is recommended that greater use be made of assessment findings so that learning tasks are matched to the varying abilities of pupils.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Reviewed policies provide staff with specific guidance on teaching practices in the case of pupils with special learning needs. Supportive interactions are organised and learning programmes are astutely prepared. It should be ensured that the learning objectives are appropriate to the needs of pupils and that progress continues to be recorded. An encouraging beginning has been made with in-class support. It would be beneficial if the learning support programme was restructured to ensure that more in-class and co-operative teaching is practised.

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 Scoil Naithí welcomes the report that acknowledges the role of all participants.

The board welcomes the recognition given to the promotion of Irish as the main language of communication of the school and the high standard of pupil achievement in Irish, English and Mathematics.

The board and school community are committed to high standard, dedication and co-operation referred to in the various sections of the 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 recommendations of the report are being discussed by the board of management.

The above is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management