

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil na Croise Naofa,
Geashill, County Offaly
Roll Number: 091911

Date of inspection: 10 February 2011



1. Introduction

Scoil na Croise Naofa is a mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It is situated in Geashill, a small community between Tullamore and Portarlinton. Currently the school has four mainstream class teachers, one learning-support teacher and a teacher for the special class for deaf pupils. The school also employs a part-time secretary, caretaker and cleaner. There are 104 pupils on roll. 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:

- The principal and deputy principal provide proficient leadership to the school.
- The quality of teaching, in both mainstream and special educational needs settings, is very good.
- Pupils are successfully engaged in their learning and the quality of learning outcomes, in many areas, is very good.
- The quality of whole-school planning is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The role of the parents should be broadened to include involvement in policy formation and in school life.
- A whole-school approach to assessment in mainstream classes should be devised and implemented.
- *Moltar tuilleadh béime a chur ar chothú na fíorchumarsáide sa Ghaeilge. An increased emphasis should be placed on fostering pupils' conversational abilities in Irish.*

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management discharges its duties effectively. An agreed report should be a standard item at all meetings and its contents should be disseminated to the school community.
- The principal provides very effective leadership to the school. He models proficient instructional leadership, nurtures a positive school climate and successfully empowers his colleagues. The deputy principal very competently fulfils her assigned duties and assumes a general leadership role within the school.
- The parents' association provides good support to the school in terms of fundraising and resource provision. Its remit should be broadened to include involvement in policy formation and in school life. It should also consider affiliating to the National Parents' Council - Primary.

- Parents receive very good quality information on school issues and on their children's education. The vast majority of parents, who completed questionnaires as part of this evaluation, feel welcome in school and are very happy with arrangements for parent-teacher meetings and school reports. They also express their satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching in the school. There is scope to provide parents with a broader range of school policies.
- Pupils engage eagerly in all class activities. Their behaviour inside and outside of the classrooms, is very good and very positive pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil relationships prevail. Data garnered through pupil questionnaires support the contention that relationships within the school are very positive. Pupils also indicate that they feel comfortable and secure within the school and are confident about their learning.
- The school is commended for the practical initiatives it undertakes to sustain strong links with the local community.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school's planning process is informed by a specific action plan, agreed by the staff and ratified by the board. This is good practice and should be further developed through linking the process of action planning with school self-evaluation.
- Very good quality administrative policies are available. They are clear, informed by relevant circulars and contextualised. The school's action plan correctly prioritises the learning-support and assessment policies for review.
- The quality of curriculum planning is very good. Plans provide explicit guidance on appropriate content and methodologies and facilitate continuity and progression in subject areas throughout the school. Teachers are advised to utilise the school's curriculum plans as the basis for their long-term schemes.
- Teachers plan well for their teaching. Comprehensive long-term schemes, short-term plans and monthly progress records are prepared by all teachers. The consistent use of curriculum objectives in short-term planning would enhance the quality of planning and facilitate the assessment of pupils' progress.
- Teachers in special educational needs settings prepare individual learning profiles (ILP) or individual educational plans (IEPs) for all pupils in receipt of support. Targets, programmes of work and relevant curriculum objectives are also prepared separately for these pupils. It is now recommended that these plans be merged into one comprehensive ILP or IEP. Parents of pupils with low incident special educational needs should receive copies of relevant IEPs.

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 overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well structured, in line with curriculum content and clearly presented. Good use is made of resources to mediate learning and very stimulating learning environments are created in all classes. In many cases learning activities are differentiated. This very good practice should be further developed within the school.
- Sa Ghaeilge déantar obair shuimiúil sna ceithre snáithe agus moltar go háirithe, an taithí leathan a sholáthraítear sa scríbhneoireacht. Léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint mhaith ar an nGaeilge agus tá sé ar chumas a bhfórmhóir ceisteanna a fhreagairt le líofacht áirithe. D'fhéadfaí, áfach, cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Chuige sin moltar breis béime a chur ar thréimhse chumarsáide na gceachtanna agus taithí a sholáthair do na daltaí an teanga a úsáid i gcomhráithe nádúrtha
- *In Irish interesting activities are completed in the four strands and the broad writing experiences provided to pupils is particularly commended. Pupils display a good understanding of Irish and the majority of them answer questions with a degree of fluency. There is scope, however, to further extend pupils' conversational abilities. It is recommended, therefore, that an increased emphasis be placed on the communicative stage of lessons and on enabling pupils to use the language in natural conversations.*
- English is taught effectively. Pupils' skills as emergent writers are carefully nurtured at infant level. Throughout the school they receive varied opportunities to write in different genres and across all curricular areas. The standard of handwriting in all classes is very good. Reading skills are systematically developed at infant and junior level. Initiatives such as paired reading and explicit teaching of reading skills are utilised to promote pupils' reading skills at middle and senior standards. While class novels are included in the programme for middle and senior classes, they could be more central to the school's reading programme. Oral language is covered with all classes. Basing lessons on specific curriculum objectives and explicitly teaching new vocabulary would further enhance provision for English.
- Very good practice is evident in the teaching of Mathematics. Lessons are clearly taught and pupils engage in well-planned activities that support the mastery of skills and concepts. Effective differentiation of learning activities and beneficial in-class support enable the targeting of activities to pupils' varying abilities. In the future development of Mathematics, teachers should increase the emphasis on enabling pupils to apply computational skills to real-life problem solving.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Geography is very good. Programmes in each class contain an effective blend of content from the three strands and also facilitate the development of geographical skills. Field trips in the immediate locality are undertaken at various class levels. Pupils record their learning in a variety of interesting ways and can discuss geographical concepts with understanding.
- The school has developed a very good system of recording attainments in standardised tests that enable the tracking of pupils' progress and the identification of learning difficulties. All mainstream class teachers implement a broad range of useful assessment strategies. The school is now advised to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and to incorporate the most valuable of them into a co-ordinated, whole-school approach to assessment in mainstream classes. Diagnostic assessment is utilised to very good effect in special educational needs settings.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. A well organised system of learning support, based on the continuum of support, is in place. Effective screening and early intervention strategies are implemented and a combination of withdrawal and in-class support provided.
- Provision in the special class for deaf pupils is very good. A commendable emphasis is placed on the development of skills in speech and listening, language and communication and literacy development. Teaching, in both support settings, is clear and focused. Both learning environments are stimulating, print-rich and supportive.
- An individual integration plan is devised for each deaf pupil. All teachers willingly co-operate with the integration of deaf pupils in mainstream classes and the special needs assistant provides invaluable support in this regard. The school is advised to assess deaf pupils' attainments in curriculum areas for which they are integrated and to base future planning for integration on these assessment results.

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 wishes to acknowledge the courtesy and professionalism of the Inspector.

The Board welcomes the very positive findings of the Report.

The Board wishes to draw particular attention to the finding in the Report which describes the quality of teaching in both mainstream and special educational needs settings as very good.

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, working with the Principal and staff, are implementing the recommendations outlined in the Report.