

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Pádraig Naofa
Bray, Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla: 175370

Date of inspection: 24 February 2012



1. Introduction

Scoil Pádraig Naofa is a Catholic primary school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Order and the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. The school caters for boys and girls in the infant classes and for girls from first to sixth classes. The attendance of the 751 pupils is generally very good. The trustees support the school effectively to promote the Loreto philosophy of education and to foster a common purpose among the school community.

During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in seventeen mainstream class settings and four 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 ethos of the school is clearly manifest in the unity of purpose, high quality relationships and pastoral care and in the positive and respectful environment.
- The board of management functions very effectively.
- The principal demonstrates highly developed management and organisational skills and a climate of open communication, supportive collaboration and team work is cultivated successfully.
- The commitment and professionalism of staff are commended. A good range of teaching approaches, including technology, is employed effectively to support teaching and learning.
- The overall standards of pupil achievement in the school are very good.
- Pupils present as well behaved, interested and motivated learners.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and engage meaningfully in a range of school activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In order to accommodate fully the range of pupil abilities, assessment outcomes should be used systematically to guide greater differentiation of teaching and learning activities at individual class levels.
- Instructional leadership across the school should be enhanced.
- Further opportunities should be provided for active, for group and for independent learning.
- Sa Ghaeilge, moltar aird níos corasaí a dhiriú ar dhul chun cinn scileanna scríbhneoireachta neamhspleácha na ndaltaí. *In Irish, more systematic attention should be placed on the progression of the pupils' independent writing skills.*

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions very effectively. It plays a constructive role in the formulation of the school plan. Its consideration of overall teaching and learning matters and its active promotion of channels of communication are highly praised. Members undertake a range of responsibilities in a professional and collaborative manner.
- The principal demonstrates highly-developed management and organisational skills. The Loreto ethos is central to his vision. He successfully cultivates a climate of open communication, supportive collaboration and team work. The principal is ably supported by the recently appointed administrative deputy principal. They operate as a competent and reflective team and their work is guided by a strong sense of shared purpose. The in-school management team undertake a range of duties conscientiously and contribute to positive developments in teaching and learning. It is now timely that instructional leadership across the school is enhanced. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents confirm that they are happy with the school and that it is well run.
- The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard. An extensive range of resources, including ICT, are used purposefully. Some excellent displays of the pupils' work and teaching material are evident. The planned increased use of ICT by pupils is welcomed. Ancillary staff contribute significantly to the smooth operation of the school.
- Relationships and communication with parents and the wider community are very good. Parents are actively supportive of the work of the school and play a meaningful part in a range of activities. The welcoming school environment and effective communication structures are corroborated by the responses to parental questionnaires.
- The management of pupils is very good. An atmosphere of respect, cooperation and encouragement is created successfully. Pupils present as well behaved, interested and motivated learners. Their sense of responsibility and their development as agents of social change are promoted purposefully. In their questionnaire responses, almost all pupils report that they feel safe, get on well with others and that it is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Credible work has been undertaken in relation to the school plan and a process of school self evaluation has been initiated. Management and staff have identified areas for review and development. To build on this work, the adoption of an action planning approach, as employed in the development of the school's e-learning plan, is recommended. This will assist in the systematic monitoring of the implementation and impact of agreed whole-school approaches on pupil learning.
- The collaborative approach to planning for each class group is praised. However, practices in relation to individual teacher planning and recording of progress vary. In order to maximise the impact of planning on the pupils' learning, current approaches should be reviewed and augmented. An increased focus on the identification of specific skill development, the intended learning outcomes and the tracking of pupil progress are advised. Further use of monthly progress records to monitor the effectiveness of curriculum implementation should also be considered.

- 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 and learning ranges from good to very good. Features of effective practice include the sharing of lesson objectives with pupils, building on their previous knowledge and understanding and facilitating their active involvement in learning. Consequently, good pupil engagement levels are evident. Learning environments are positive and teachers demonstrate commitment and professionalism. To build constructively on established practices, further opportunities for active, for group and for independent learning are recommended. In their responses most pupils confirm that explanations are clear and that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Many fine examples of assessment modes are in evidence and in their questionnaire responses most pupils confirm that teachers advise them on how to improve their work. In order to maximise the impact of assessment activity, it is recommended that the outcomes of assessment be used systematically to inform higher levels of differentiation to accommodate the range of pupil ability levels. The development of a new school information management system is praised.
- Ar an iomlán tá múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Baintear dea-úsáid as raon stráitéisí chun deiseanna cainte a chruthú do dhaltaí. Tá foclóir breá leathan ar eolas ag na daltaí. Éiríonn leo abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt bunaithe ar na téamaí idir lámha. Chun a gcumas labhartha agus saibhreas teanga a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, b'fhiú dul siar go han-rialta ar na téamaí agus an t-ábhar teanga a bhfuil déanta cheana féin. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le líofacht agus léiríonn siad tuiscint bhreá ar ábhar na léitheoireachta. Scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil is mó a chleachtar cé go soláthraítear samplaí áirithe de scríbhneoireacht phearsanta na ndaltaí. Moltar aird níos corasaí a dhíriú ar dhul chun cinn a scileanna scríbhneoireachta neamhspleácha.

Overall teaching and learning in Irish is of a good standard. Effective use is made of a range of strategies to develop oral language opportunities for pupils. The pupils have a broad vocabulary range. They can compose simple sentences and ask and answer questions based on the themes being addressed. In order to further improve their speaking competence and richness of language, regular revision of lesson themes and language content is advised. The majority of pupils read fluently and demonstrate positive understanding of reading material. Functional writing activities are primarily practised while some examples of the pupils' personal writing are in evidence. More systematic attention should be placed on the progression of their independent writing skills.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high quality. Some very good examples of explicit teaching of vocabulary and the use of thematic approaches to oral language are in evidence. Overall, the pupils express themselves with admirable confidence and competence. Very good reading standards are in evidence in response to the school's effective implementation of a multi-strategy approach. Most pupils report that they are doing well at reading. In many classes, pupils' response to and appreciation of poetry is productively promoted. Some very good samples of the pupils' written work are evident. The dissemination of the new writing policy will guide the incremental development of a process approach to writing across the genres throughout the school. Handwriting generally is very good and the presentation of written work is highly commended.

- Overall pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good and the school-wide improvements in mathematical outcomes are commended. Key elements of good practice include the use of a good range of resources and mathematics-rich environments. The emphasis on the promotion of mental mathematics skills is praised and is worthy of extension. In order to optimise pupils' learning potential, it is recommended that that assessment information be used to inform teaching in all classes so that pupils are taught and challenged at a level appropriate to their ability. The school has prioritised the improvement of problem-solving skills. In so doing, a multi-faceted approach will support improvement in this area. A majority of pupils' surveyed believe they are doing well at Mathematics.
- The standard of teaching and learning in History is very good. The pupils' skills of working as historians are fostered successfully through the use of cooperative tasks, project work and presentations. Their sense of empathy is cultivated effectively through the use of Drama. Resources including artefacts, documentary evidence and ICT are used productively. Visits from local historians and school trips are employed purposefully. The pupils demonstrate praiseworthy knowledge and understanding of topics undertaken.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school's commitment to inclusion is discernible in the collegial approach to supporting pupils where cultural diversity is celebrated and pastoral care promoted.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and pupils for whom English is an additional language experience being educated in a supportive learning environment. The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are structured and well resourced. Pupils engage positively in the range of learning tasks and their self-esteem is fostered purposefully. Education plans are prepared for pupils in consultation with class teachers and parents. It is advised that, in all instances, learning targets are sufficiently specific and that the attainment of discrete learning targets is assessed and recorded more systematically. The special needs assistants support the inclusion and care of pupils.
- Supplementary teaching is provided through a combination of pupil withdrawal and in-class support. The school's commitment to the implementation of the revised SEN policy is noted. In particular, the formal adoption of stage one of the staged approach, a review of the deployment of resources with an increased focus on prevention, early intervention initiatives and the more able pupils and the use of a broader range of structured team-teaching interventions are welcomed.

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 St. Patrick's would like to thank the reporting inspector and her colleagues for their courtesy, consideration and professionalism throughout the process of the whole school evaluation. The Board welcomes the report which is balanced and fair. In particular, the Board appreciates the affirmation received in the report with regard to

- The school's ethos and culture
- The effectiveness of the Board of Management
- The professionalism and commitment of the staff
- The standards of pupil achievement
- The levels of interest and motivation as well as the behaviour of the children
- The meaningful involvement and support of parents

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 also welcomes the specific areas for development that are identified in the report and is reassured that they are in keeping with the areas for development identified by the school as part of the school self-evaluation process. Progress has already been made in these areas since the process of evaluation was completed and the school looks forward to implementing further change as part of the school improvement plan which is currently under development.