An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bhríde, Presentation Primary School
Midleton, Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla: 00512D

Date of inspection: 1 October 2010
1. Introduction

Scoil Bhríde, Presentation Primary School, is located in Midleton, Co. Cork. The school enrolls girls in all classes and boys at infant level. Current enrolment stands at 507 girls and 91 boys. There is a strong Catholic ethos in the school. The mission statement places significant emphasis on the holistic education of children in a safe, happy and co-operative environment.

The teaching staff consists of the principal, twenty-two class teachers and fourteen support-teachers, eight of whom are job-sharing and one of whom is shared with another school. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in eighteen mainstream class settings and in seven support-teaching settings.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report. 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 is very well managed by a dedicated board of management.
- The school is led by a very committed principal who provides positive leadership and management.
- The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard, providing a comfortable and stimulating environment for pupils and staff.
- A strong spirit of commitment and generosity of time and effort pervades throughout the staff.
- Overall, high quality teaching, learning and levels of pupil achievement were observed in classrooms and support settings.
- The school has embraced the concept of co-operative teaching and implements an effective, well-organised in-class support programme in Mathematics.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The use of interactive teaching and learning practices through increased group teaching and enhanced differentiation should be extended throughout the school.
- Parents should be made aware of the school’s child protection procedures.
- The effective in-class support that is provided in Mathematics should be used as a model for the provision of further in-class support programmes.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is very well managed by a very committed and conscientious board of management. The board discusses and ratifies school policies and oversees their ongoing review. The chairperson provides good support for the work of the school through regular communication with the principal and staff.

- The school is led by a very committed principal who provides positive leadership and management in a collaborative setting. She has capably led the school through a period
significant development, which included the successful completion of a major building project.

- The deputy principal provides dedicated support to the principal and they display very good collaborative work practices. In addition, the principal is supported by an in-school management team whose members demonstrate a strong spirit of commitment and give generously of their time. In further developing the in-school management structure, it is advised that formal meetings be convened and that curriculum-leadership roles be assigned to in-school management team members.

- School accommodation consists of two buildings, including a newly built sixteen-classroom school, with a large hall and play areas separating both. The new building has facilitated the transfer of part of the junior section of the school, which had been located on a different site, into the campus. All classrooms are well equipped with a wide variety of resources including information and communication technologies (ICTs). The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. Significant attention is placed on environmental awareness, which is evident in the award of three flags through the Green-Schools programme. The school benefits from the services of a very committed and hard-working ancillary staff.

- The school is supported by a dedicated parents’ association. The principal and a staff member attend monthly meetings, which is welcomed by the association. During the evaluation, initial decisions were made by the school and parents’ association to issue a termly newsletter with contributions from the school, the association and the board. Responses to the parental questionnaire that issued as part of the evaluation indicate that parents are very positive about the work of the school and the education provided to their children.

- The pupils in this school are courteous, friendly and co-operative. The principal makes effective use of a daily assembly to uphold the ethos of the school and to encourage pupils across a range of domains. Responses to the pupil questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of pupils like school, feel safe in school and enjoy their classroom work.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school has put in place a comprehensive suite of organisational policies that guide the work of the school. More recently, parents have been invited to contribute to the policy development process. Greater involvement by parents in the development and review of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy is recommended. Commendably, a number of curricular plans include references to agreed staff decisions on the implementation of generic principles of teaching and learning.

- All teachers provide long and short-term planning documents. It is recommended that teachers place greater focus on differentiation and assessment in their planning. In this regard, the benefits of adopting a common approach to short-term planning that emphasises these elements should be considered.

- The school engages positively in a number of school self-evaluation practices including the maintenance of a development plan for the review and implementation of revised policies. To assist in the ongoing development of school self-evaluation, staff and management are encouraged to refer to the Department of Education and Science publication, *Looking At Our School, 2003*. 

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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 and school staff; 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. It is now recommended that parents be made formally aware of the school’s child protection procedures. 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

Sna naionán, baintear dea-úsaid as ábhair réalaíoc chun frásaí a mhúineadh. Daingnitéar an teanga múinte le hobair bheirte agus le rainn atá foilshlamhtha go beadh. Sna bunranganna agus sna meánranganna, déanann na daltaí cleachtadh léitheoireachta le leabhair leabharlainne agus baintear dea-úsáid as slúagaléitheoireachta agus as léitheoireacht i ggrúpaí. Tríd an scoil, agus sna hardranganna ach go háirithe, baintear usáid inmhölta as teicneolaíochtaí an eolaís chun spéis agus cumas na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Moltar go mór an polasaí sa scoil i leith múineadh an Chorpóideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge. Chun dúshlán breise a thabhairt, b'fhiú go mór na daltaí a spreagadh chun comhráítí a chur de ghlanmheabhair agus iad á gcleachtadh acu.

At the infant level, good use is made of concrete materials to teach phrases. The language taught is reinforced through pair-work and rhymes. In the junior and middle classes, pupils practise reading in large and small groups with the aid of library books. Throughout the school, and particularly in the senior classes, ICT is used to very good effect to develop pupils’ interest and competency in the language. The policy of teaching Physical Education through the medium of Irish is highly commendable. To challenge the pupils further, it would be worthwhile to encourage them to memorise conversation pieces as they practise them.

The English programme is implemented effectively throughout the school. Pupils’ emergent-reading skills are carefully developed in the junior classes. Pupils in middle and senior classes read a variety of material to a high standard and class novels feature in the programmes. Pupils benefit positively from their participation in CAPER (Children and Parents Enjoying Reading), a programme that encourages parents to read with their children at home. Pupils write in various genres and for different audiences, as evidenced by the attractively displayed samples in many classrooms. In developing the school’s oral language programme, it is recommended that teachers emphasise the acquisition of discrete language skills during each lesson. Pupils are exposed to a variety of poems, as well as being afforded opportunities to compose their own poetry.

Some very good practices were observed in the teaching and learning of Mathematics. An extensive range of mathematical resources supports active learning by pupils effectively. Pupils’ abilities in problem solving and in mental mathematics are well developed and due emphasis is placed on expanding their mathematical vocabulary. Teachers regularly relate the mathematical concepts being taught to pupils’ experiences. More consistent use of the physical environment, including the use of mathematics trails, would gainfully enhance pupils’ awareness of their mathematical surroundings.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil engagement in Social, Personal and Health, Education (SPHE) is very good. An effective combination of whole-class teaching and participative group-work is employed during lessons. The Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE
programmes are used effectively in mediating the SPHE curriculum. The school ethos and positive school atmosphere contribute significantly to the implementation of the SPHE programme on a whole-school basis.

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement observed during the evaluation ranged from good to very good. In the majority of classes, a strong emphasis is placed on interactive teaching with effective use of group teaching and differentiated learning. This commendable practice should be extended to all classes.

- Teachers employ a variety of formal and informal assessment techniques to monitor and record pupils’ progress. Information on pupils’ achievement is communicated clearly to parents at the annual parent/teacher meeting and in the end-of-year report.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Almost one third of the pupils come from international backgrounds demonstrating a commitment to the school’s inclusive ethos. The English as an Additional Language support-teachers provide high-quality supplementary teaching and learning. Lessons are well organised and good use is made of a variety of resources.

- The support provided by class teachers for pupils with additional learning needs is capably reinforced by a committed learning-support/resource teacher team. Support teachers relate well with pupils and have created a very positive learning environment in their support rooms.

- Good quality collaborative planning exists between support teachers and class teachers. While most supplementary support is provided on a withdrawal basis, the school has initiated an effective in-class support programme in Mathematics. This programme should be used as a model for further in-class support programmes that will provide: a positive alternative to the withdrawal of pupils; support in literacy; and early-intervention programmes in the infant classes.

- Scoil Bhríde is welcoming of pupils from the Traveller community. Additional support is provided for these pupils by a committed resource teacher for travellers. Pupils receive support in literacy and numeracy on a withdrawal basis. It is recommended that available resources be used to create additional opportunities for in-class support for the pupils.
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 Bhride wish to thank the Inspectors of the Department of Education & Skills for the courteous manner in which they conducted the W.S.E. The Board of Management is pleased that the report acknowledges the strong spirit of commitment and generosity of time and effort that pervades throughout the school.

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 school community is happy to report that we have begun to implement the recommendations of the report. The recommendations will inform future school self-evaluation and planning.