

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Brigid's National School,  
Beechpark Lawn, Castleknock, Dublin 15  
Uimhir rolla: 00697S**

**Date of inspection: 3 March 2011**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

## 1. Introduction

St. Brigid's National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The current enrolment is eight hundred and seventy pupils and attendance levels are good. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in fourteen mainstream class settings and four support teaching settings. The subjects evaluated were Irish, English, Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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 board of management functions very effectively and is committed to school improvement and development.
- The work of the principal manifests considerable commitment and dedication to all aspects of school leadership.
- The in-school management team participates effectively in shared decision making.
- There is evidence of very good quality teaching across the school and information and communications technology (ICT) as a pedagogical tool in the classroom is skilfully employed.
- Pupil achievement in English reading and Mathematics is very good.
- Baintear caighdeán maith amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. (*Good standards are achieved in the teaching and learning of Irish*).
- The school is effectively supported by an active parent-teacher association.
- Many pupils are enthusiastic learners and their viewpoints and suggestions for improvement are sought in a consistent manner.
- Very good practice is evident with regard to the recording and analysis of literacy and numeracy assessment data.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The deployment of a teacher for ICT should be discontinued.
- Existing provision of in-class support should be further developed to include well-structured prevention, intervention and enrichment programmes for pupils receiving support.
- A review of the varied approaches to classroom assessment, including the development of assessment strategies for all curricular areas, is recommended.

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The board of management functions very effectively and members perform their duties in a decisive and focused manner. The current priorities of the board include the development of school facilities and the completion of a building programme.
- The in-school management team comprises a principal, an administrative deputy principal and fifteen promoted posts. The school is led very effectively by a very dedicated principal. He is committed to the holistic development of all pupils and the achievement and maintenance of high standards in teaching and learning. His effective interpersonal skills are instrumental in fostering very high levels of collaboration and collegiality among staff.
- The administrative deputy principal provides very valuable support to the principal and their teamwork is instrumental in furthering school development and effective organisational practices. The in-school management team participates well in shared decision-making. Outcomes of some team meetings are recorded. A more structured approach to this aspect of record keeping is recommended.
- In general, staff is deployed appropriately. However, the current deployment of a teacher for ICT is not in accordance with Departmental guidelines. It is strongly recommended that this allocation be discontinued. A staff rotation policy should be developed to ensure greater clarity with regard to staff movement from year to year. The management of material resources is very good and they are used effectively to support the implementation of various aspects of the curriculum.
- Clear channels of communication have been established between the school, the parents and the board of management. The parent-teacher association provides valuable support to the school.
- The management of pupils is very good. Their highly successful involvement in many sporting and choral activities generates a sense of community and affords opportunities for their holistic development as envisaged in the school's mission statement.

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

- The quality of whole-school administrative planning is very good. Commendably, whole-school curricular plans are reflective of the school context and are very useful in guiding the work of teachers in all curricular areas.
- There is evidence of effective collaborative long-term planning at class level. Almost all teachers whose work was evaluated provided short-term planning documentation. It is recommended that management ensures that all teachers maintain planning. The quality of individual short-term planning varies. Monthly progress records are maintained.
- A good level of self-evaluation pertains in this school. The school's focus on achieving and maintaining high standards in teaching and learning has underpinned many elements of school self-evaluation. In-school management has now prioritised the need for further monitoring of the implementation of the school plan. The current approach to short-term planning and to documenting the monthly report should form part of this review process.
- 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**

- Baintear caighdeán maith amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaím na Gaeilge. Tá sé ar chumas roinnt mhaith daltaí abairtí a struchtúru go cruinn. Léann na daltaí le cruinneas agus le tuiscint áirithe. Moltar soláthar breise d'ábhar léitheoireachta níos dúshlánaí a chur ar fáil do na daltaí. Tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta go maith agus éiríonn le roinnt mhaith daltaí téacsanna scríbhneoireachta a chumadh go neamhspleách. Is fiú go mór próiseas na scríbhneoireachta a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Moltar measúnú rialta a dhéanamh ar dhul chun cinn na ndaltaí sa teanga.
- *Good standards are achieved in the teaching and learning of Irish. Many pupils are capable of structuring sentences correctly. Pupils read with accuracy and a certain understanding. The selection of more challenging reading material is recommended. Good standards in writing are achieved and many pupils compose texts independently. It would be very worthwhile to further develop the writing process. The systematic assessment of pupils' language skills is recommended.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Talk and discussion opportunities are prioritised in all contexts and pupils in many classrooms respond with enthusiasm to well-chosen poetry. It is advised that oral language skills be addressed more systematically and that discrete language time be guided by clear objectives. Emergent reading is handled very well and, throughout the school, pupils' reading experiences and attainment are very good. The teaching of writing is good in most classrooms; some examples of highly effective practice were noted during the evaluation.
- The quality of provision for Mathematics is very good. Lessons observed during the evaluation were clear, well paced and active. Pupils show enthusiasm for the subject and most are achieving very well. There is scope for further exploration of the immediate environment in some classrooms through, for example, the use of mathematical trails.
- Provision for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is strong in many areas. The inclusive atmosphere and respectful relationships within the school are tangible evidence of this strength. Discrete SPHE lessons are timetabled appropriately. The work to foster pupils' voice and the democratic process is very promising. The establishment of the pupils' council and committee work in obtaining the school's first green flag are examples of this. In a few classrooms, pupils maintain portfolios of work and this should be adopted on a whole-school basis. A consistent approach to assessment in the subject should also be developed.
- In the classrooms where teaching and learning was observed, the overall quality of teaching and learning was very good. In some instances, however, there is potential to provide differentiated learning activities to accommodate the various levels of pupils' abilities. The competent use of ICT by teachers as a pedagogical and learning tool contributes effectively to pupils' educational experiences.

- A comprehensive policy underpins the approach to assessment. The school is commended for the comprehensive manner by which these results are analysed, tracked and communicated to all partners. A review of the varied approaches to classroom assessment, including the development of assessment strategies for all curricular areas, is recommended.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- The quality of the provision for pupils in receipt of additional learning support is good, in general. Supplementary support is delivered by ten teachers, mostly on a withdrawal basis but with some in-class support. The current accommodation for these pupils should be reviewed in order to ensure more suitable learning environments for pupils. A comprehensive whole-school policy underpins provision in support settings. Individualised educational plans (IEPs) have been prepared for all pupils, the quality of which varies. A wider range of diagnostic assessment tools should be used to better identify pupils' needs when drafting such learning plans. In all instances, weekly planning programmes, aligned to the targets set out in the IEPs and detailed progress records, should be systematically documented.
- In general, lessons in support settings are well resourced and implemented effectively. A specific support programme is provided for higher-achieving pupils. The programme is ICT based and delivered through pupil withdrawal from the mainstream setting. While the programme incorporates many successful elements, it is advised that, in general, support for these pupils should be managed within the classroom context. Good examples of team teaching were observed during the evaluation. In-class support should now be further extended to include well-structured prevention, intervention and enrichment programmes for pupils in the different support settings. The further development of co-operative team-teaching is also advised.
- Language support for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is mainly provided on a withdrawal basis. Pupils' communicative language is developed suitably through a range of effective methodologies. Further focus should now be placed on the systematic development of pupils' cognitive language particularly through in-class support structures.
- The special needs assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning under the guidance of class teachers.

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# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

On behalf of the school community, The Board of Management of St. Brigid's N.S. would like to express its gratitude to the inspectorate for the professional courtesy extended to us during the recent WSE. We found the process to be a positive experience and the main strengths of the school as outlined in your report are particularly encouraging.

We welcome the affirmation in the Report of the commitment and dedication of the Board, the Principal, the teachers, the assistants and ancillary staff to our school.

The Board and staff are pleased that the school's lack of accommodation, especially that for learning support has been noted in the report.

We are committed to implementing the recommendations outlined in 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**

1. Staff allocation for 2011-2012 will address the staff deployment recommendations
2. The Learning Support Team has engaged with the Special Education Support Service in order to review and further develop the in-class support that they provide
3. A sub-committee of the staff will continue to develop the current assessment policy to ensure it extends to all areas of the curriculum