

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning
REPORT**

**St Brendan's National School,
Bantry, Co Cork
Uimhir rolla: 10548H**

Date of inspection: 18 November 2013



Introduction

St Brendan's National School is a co-educational primary school located in the town of Bantry in West Cork. Currently, twenty-nine pupils attend the school and enrolment numbers are falling in accordance with demographic trends in the area. The school is under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a review of a selection of school documents.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The board of management is very supportive of the school,
- The school is maintained to a high standard.
- The parents' association works hard to support the school.
- The principal is hardworking, diligent and is well-supported by staff.
- Pastoral care provision is of a very high quality and there is an inclusive environment within the school.
- The pupils are motivated, enthusiastic, courteous and very well behaved.

The following areas **require improvement**:

- The board of management should now engage in a systematic process of reviewing and updating the curricular and administrative school policies.
- Moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ar bhonn uile scoile. *It is recommended that a plan be put in place in Irish to further develop the communicative skills of the pupils.*
- The systematic use of objectives in teachers' planning and monthly progress reports is recommended in order to ensure better continuity and progression in curriculum implementation.
- It is recommended that the use of assessment of learning and assessment for learning be further developed across a wider range of curricular subjects.
- Further analysis of school assessment data should be undertaken to inform school planning.

Findings

1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning achievements of the pupils are good. High levels of enthusiastic and productive pupil participation are secured in a wide variety of learning activities. Pupil assessment data in literacy and numeracy should be analysed to further inform planning and teaching.
- In English, the majority of pupils read with fluency and expression. They express themselves confidently and competently and they write in a commendable manner across a range of genres.
- The quality of pupil achievement in Mathematics is generally good and effective use is made of a wide range of manipulative materials to scaffold pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. While many pupils are competent in numeracy, an increased emphasis on the practical use of mathematical concepts and operations in the school environment would complement existing provision.
- Léiríonn tromlach na ndaltaí tuiscint ar na ceachtanna sa Ghaeilge. Moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go céimniúil ar bhonn uile scoile. *(Most pupils demonstrate an*

understanding of the Irish lessons. It is recommended that a structured plan be put in place in Irish to further develop the communicative skills of the pupils.).

- In the special education setting, the pupils are making satisfactory progress in accordance with their abilities. The establishment of a system for tracking pupils' progress in learning support and resource teaching settings would further enhance provision in this area.

2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in this school is good. Teachers are experienced and talented and they demonstrated a keen awareness of the need to differentiate their teaching to accommodate the wide range of abilities in their multi-grade classes.
- Teachers encourage collaborative and active learning in their classrooms.
- Teachers provide written planning for their work. The systematic use of objectives in teachers' planning and monthly progress reports is recommended with a view to ensuring better continuity and progression in curriculum implementation. While assessment practices are well established in literacy and numeracy, approaches need to be extended to other curricular areas.

3. Support for pupils' well-being

- Pupils in this school are very well cared for and supported. The school has a close-knit, familial atmosphere and significant attention is devoted to the social, cultural and moral development of pupils. Results from questionnaires issued to pupils in the middle and senior classes reveal that all pupils feel safe in the school, can approach teachers if they have concerns, and believe St Brendan's NS to be a good school.
- The responses from the parental questionnaires indicate a high level of satisfaction with educational provision within the school.
- 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 generally compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. The full implementation of the *Stay Safe Programme* is now recommended.

4. Leadership and Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and discharges its duties in a highly supportive manner. It has been instrumental in ensuring the school premises was refurbished, is well maintained and that an extensive range of resources are in place. It is now recommended that the board reviews a number of curricular plans and administrative policies. The board should also review school opening and closing times in line with departmental Circular 11/95.
- The principal is diligent, hardworking and committed to the school. She, with the assistance of the deputy principal, builds a positive environment for teaching and learning and promotes a high level of pastoral care. She effectively leads a school team including secretary, caretaker and cleaner all of whom greatly assist in the day-to-day operation of the school.

5. School Self-evaluation

- The school has engaged in a systematic process of school self-evaluation which involved analysis of assessment data, and the issuing of questionnaires to capture parents' and pupils' perspectives. A number of targets have been outlined for literacy in the school's three-year development plan. Further refinement of these targets is now recommended.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to make the necessary improvements is very good. There was strong evidence during the evaluation of a commitment by the principal and staff to school improvement. The school staff engaged very openly with the evaluation process and displayed enthusiasm for the further development of professional practice.

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