

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Brigid's National School
Manor Kilbride, County Wicklow
Uimhir rolla: 10683N

Date of inspection: 9 February 2011



1. Introduction

St. Brigid's NS, Manor Kilbride, is a vertical co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance level of the 131 pupils enrolled is generally good. 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:

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good and the teachers demonstrate competence in their teaching.
- The standards achieved by pupils in all strands of the English curriculum are very good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good.
- The management of pupils is very good; discipline is excellent throughout the school and the pupils present as confident young learners.
- The principal, who has a long association with the school, demonstrates very good organisational and administrative skills.
- The building is maintained to a high standard and provides an excellent learning environment.
- The school has a wide range of resources which are managed and utilised in teaching and learning effectively.
- The board of management and parents significantly support the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The immediate attention of the board of management is drawn to issues of compliance with Department of Education and Skills circulars regarding the deployment of the principal to a special education post and the retention of pupils.
- It is recommended that communication skills in Irish be thoroughly consolidated during lessons and progressively throughout the school year. In addition, greater emphasis should be placed on the teaching of reading in Irish.
- It is recommended that supports for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) be reviewed. This review should focus on aspects of policy development, programme planning and records management.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets regularly and is very supportive of the work of the school. It is commended on the recent refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of the

building to a very high standard. The immediate attention of the board is drawn to the matter of compliance with the terms of section 14 of Circular 07/03 regarding the deployment of the principal to a special education post.

- The principal has a long association with the school and demonstrates very good organisational and administrative skills. Results of parent questionnaires indicate that the majority of parents feel the school is well run. The principal displays a deep knowledge of educational issues and facilitates all members of staff to utilise their individual talents for the benefit of the pupils. The deputy principal and special duties teacher work diligently in carrying out a wide range of duties pertaining to their posts.
- An extensive selection of resources is used effectively to support teaching and learning. The provision for and use of information and communication technology (ICT) are very good. The secretary and special needs assistant carry out a wide range of duties competently.
- Overall, the management of pupils is very good. Discipline is excellent and a respectful atmosphere is evident in all classrooms. In pupil questionnaires, almost all pupils reported that they felt safe at school and enjoyed positive relationships with their peers. Their participation in a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities positively enhances their educational experiences. The practice whereby a number of pupils are retained in school beyond eight years should be reviewed in light of Circular 32/03.
- The management of relationships and communications within the school community is good. Annual parent-teacher meetings are held and written reports on pupils' progress are issued. The parents' association is long-established and actively supports the organisation of school celebrations and events. An information booklet containing school information and pertinent school policies is sent to all parents.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Administrative policies are clear and relevant. Organisational policies are drafted by the teaching staff and brought to the board for discussion and ratification. The board devolves the review and development of curriculum plans to the teaching staff. The results of parent questionnaires indicate that there is scope for greater collaboration with parents on the formulation of school policies.
- Overall, the quality of curriculum plans is good. Plans for Mathematics and English contain clear guidance on core topics to be covered under curriculum strands and strand units for each year level. The plan for Physical Education (PE) is primarily based on the *Primary Schools' Sports Initiative* (PSSI) series of lessons. While this plan provides for breadth and balance and guidance on the use of resources and methodologies it should be made more specific to the context of the school.
- Some individual teachers' classroom planning is of a very good quality in terms of setting out clear learning objectives, resources, methodologies and differentiated learning programmes for the class levels in question. A whole-school approach should be adopted in this regard.
- The staff has begun the process of school self-evaluation. Areas for development have been identified at board and staff level. Such reviews have led to the introduction of whole-school initiatives, most notable in the area of English reading. The impact of these initiatives should be monitored carefully by the staff and board.

- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers create stimulating learning environments. The pupils are enabled to work co-operatively, for example, in producing projects in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): this work is commended. The teachers make very good provision for multi-class teaching by differentiating learning tasks and lesson content for the different class levels. The pupils present as enthusiastic and confident learners and engage keenly in lessons.
- Múintear an Ghaeilge go sásúil sa scoil. Úsáideann na h-oidí cluichí, teicneolaíocht eolais agus chumarsáide (TEC) agus acmhainní praiticiúla chun foclóir agus frásaí a mhúineadh. I ranganna áirithe aithrisíonn agus canann na daltaí réimse leathan rainn agus amhráin. Cé go bhfuil raon maith foclóra ag na daltaí agus go léiríonn siad tuiscint chuí ar an teanga labhartha tá deacreachtaí ag go leor daltaí cumarsáid a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge. Ba chóir deiseanna sa bhreis a sholáthar do na daltaí an teanga a chleachtadh agus a dhaingniú i rith thréimhse chumarsáide an cheachta. Moltar freisin cuspóirí cinnte ón bplean scoile a leagadh amach agus meastóireacht leanúnach a dhéanamh ar an dul chun cinn i rith na bliana.
- Úsáidtear téacsleabhair don fhorhmór chun an léitheoireacht a mhúineadh. Ar an iomlán baineann na daltaí caighdeán sásúil amach sa léitheoireacht. Moltar clár léitheoireachta rianúil a leagadh amach don scoil agus ábhair léitheoireachta breise, fíorleabhair Ghaeilge ina measc, a chur ar fáil i ngach seomra.

Irish is taught to a satisfactory standard in the school. All teachers use games, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and practical resources to teach vocabulary and phrases. Pupils in some classes can recite and sing a good repertoire of poems and songs. While some pupils have an appropriate range of vocabulary and demonstrate appropriate understanding of the spoken word many pupils have difficulty communicating in Irish. It is recommended that extended opportunities be provided for pupils to converse in pairs or groups during the communication phase of lessons. The setting of specific language targets at each class level drawn from the school plan for Irish and assessed progressively throughout the year is further recommended.

Textbooks are the main resource for the teaching of Irish reading. In general, the pupils can read these to a satisfactory level. A systematic approach to the teaching of reading should be devised which draws upon additional reading material, including 'real' books, in every classroom.

- Very good standards are achieved by the pupils across all strands in English. The pupils engage confidently and articulately in class discussions. The school is commended on its approach to the teaching of reading. A high number of pupils can read fluently and confidently. The pupils are producing writing of a very good quality in a variety of genres. The presentation of written work and penmanship is praiseworthy in all classes.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The teachers explain concepts clearly, present well-structured lessons and utilise a good selection of resources and methodologies in learning activities. The results of standardised tests indicate that many pupils are achieving very good standards in Mathematics. The pupils demonstrate competence in early-mathematical activities, number operations, estimation skills and problem solving.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education (PE) is very good. The teachers provide for a broad and balanced curriculum. Lessons include a range of warm-up activities, development of skills and cool-down movements. Lessons demonstrate high levels of pupil engagement and participation. The pupils exhibit very good skills in the strands of dance and athletics and cooperatively engage in games. The commitment of staff in training pupils in athletics and Gaelic games is acknowledged and commended.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Aspects of good practice evident in special education needs (SEN) settings involve competent teacher modelling, well structured lessons and good use of resources. Some individual and group learning programmes incorporate explicit learning targets and are supported by appropriate learning programmes. It is recommended that teachers in all SEN settings prepare suitable programmes of learning that incorporate specific learning targets and include regular review dates to measure achievement of targets.
- The SEN policy in place needs to be contextualised to include clear criteria for the selection and discontinuation of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching. In addition, the policy should be developed to include agreed approaches to individual teacher planning, collaborative programme planning between class teachers and support teachers, and the maintenance of records on pupils' progress.
- The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are welcomed in the school and participate fully in school activities. These pupils are supported within the mainstream context. The Primary School Assessment Kit should be utilised to assess their language proficiency levels in order to inform the provision of additional resources if necessary and assist in planning more tailored programmes for EAL pupils.

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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

The inspection report was thoroughly carried out and taken on board by the whole 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

- Integrate Irish through school life.
- Revise and add to Irish reading scheme.
- Revise L.S. throughout the school.
- Look at criteria and timetabling for L.S.