Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Brideswell National School
Brideswell, Athlone, Co. Roscommon
Uimhir rolla: 15413J

Date of inspection: 09 February 2011
1. Introduction

Brideswell National School is a rural co-educational school situated in the village of Brideswell in County Roscommon. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin and it aims to foster a lifelong love of learning in an environment where each student is cherished equally and is nourished to a personal, intellectual and moral maturity. The school caters for 70 pupils and enrolment patterns are generally stable. Pupil attendance is very good and all pupils transfer to post-primary school. The school was built in 1901 and was extended in 1994 and again in 2009. The board of management of the school 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 principal and in-school management team provide highly effective leadership. All staff members are keenly motivated and have high expectations for the pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong work ethic and they are willing and enthusiastic participants in their learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is of a high standard and effective use is made of a wide range of resources, including ICT, at all class levels.
- Overall standards in literacy and numeracy are very good.
- The school makes effective provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The board of management functions in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements and provides useful advice to the principal. Parents provide thoughtful and pragmatic support for the work of the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board of management should prepare an annual report on the operation of the school and arrange to have the report disseminated to the school community. The board should also appraise itself of standards achieved throughout the school, with particular reference to literacy and numeracy.
- The school’s self-evaluation process would be enhanced through more in-depth analysis of assessment data at whole-school level and information from pupil curriculum profiles.
- Clear communication structures should be developed between the parents’ association, parent representatives on the board of management and the wider parent body.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and it meets regularly to oversee the management of the school. Minutes of meetings are maintained and accounts of expenditure are certified annually. The chairperson is in frequent contact with the principal and they collaborate effectively regarding many aspects of school life. While the board is aware, in general terms, of the quality of teaching and learning in the school, it is recommended that a formal system be developed through which the principal would report to the board on the quality of teaching and learning outcomes achieved throughout the school. This information, together with other relevant information, should inform the board's annual report on the operation of the school.

- The in-school management team is very effective and it works cohesively and diligently in carrying out assigned duties and responsibilities. The principal provides highly effective and thoughtful leadership in all aspects of her role. Consequently, the school is very well run and there is a strong sense of purpose among teachers and pupils alike.

- The board has recently overseen a significant upgrading of the school building and grounds. This work was carried out in close collaboration with parents and the local community and all those involved can be justifiably proud of the resulting school facility that is fit for purpose and of a high standard. To ensure the present standards of hygiene and cleanliness are maintained, the board should put in place a cleaning schedule as part of the school's overall maintenance programme.

- Human resources are ably managed and suitably deployed, and the ancillary staff work diligently to support the work of the school. There is a very good supply of material resources, including ICT, to support teaching and learning.

- The parents' association has just recently been affiliated to the National Parents' Council, and it is anticipated that members will shortly avail of training. Evidence was provided during the evaluation of the significant contribution made by the parents' association to the life of the school. Parents report that they are satisfied with arrangements for home-school links and they commend the staff for their readiness to engage with parents at all times. It is anticipated that a collaborative approach will be taken to the development of enhanced communication structures between the parents' association, parent representatives on the board of management and the wider parent body.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The teachers engage in a process of self-evaluation and review. A planning diary is used to set out targets for development and to track progress in both administrative and curriculum areas. The board ratifies policy documents following a process of consultation with teaching staff and some other members of the school community. The majority of policies are drafted by the teaching staff and it is suggested that the board could take a lead role in the development of policies in relevant prioritised areas.

- All teachers provide comprehensive long-term and short-term planning and they prepare very carefully for their work. Due consideration is given to teaching and learning in the multi-class setting and to the need for differentiation to meet the needs of individual children.
Child protection policy and procedures

- 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

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers competently use a range of methodologies and there is a suitable balance between whole-class teaching, group work and individual attention. Parents express their satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school.

- The teachers regularly review the effectiveness of teaching methodologies and resources. Learning outcomes are monitored closely through the use of a wide range of assessment tools. It is suggested that school self-evaluation could be enhanced through further analysis of assessment data at whole-school level and information from pupil curriculum profiles.

- Sa Ghaeilge, úsáidtear cur chuige cumarsáideach le linn na hoibre agus léirítear na ceachtanna go héifeachtach. Eagraítear cleachtaí éisteachta do na daltaí i ngach rang agus forbairtear na bun scileanna litéitheoireachta go cúramach i bhnaíreacha agus sna h-ardranganna. Tugann na daltaí go cumasach faoi réimse chuí deiseanna scribhneoireachta. Léiríonn na daltaí dea-thuisceart ar an obair atá déanta acu agus tá roint mhaith amhráin, dánta agus rian eolas acu. Ar bhonn ulle scoile moltar a thuilleadh bheime a leagan ar leanúnachas sna téamaí agus na fó-théamaí éagsúla ó bhéal, agus ar an ngradach fhoirmiúil agus neamhfhoirmiúil sa phlean scoile.

- The communicative approach is used in Irish and the lessons are taught effectively. Listening activities are organised for the pupils in every class and basic reading skills are carefully developed in the middle and senior classes. The pupils respond competently to a suitable range of writing opportunities. They display a good understanding of the work they have done and they recite a wide range of songs, poems and rhymes. At whole school level, it is suggested that there could be more continuity in the various oral themes and sub-themes, and in formal and informal grammar in the school plan.

- The school has given very careful consideration to all aspects of teaching English and the whole-school approach to oral language development is currently under review. Pupils derive significant benefit from strategies to develop emergent reading and writing skills. Classrooms are print rich and good use is made of class libraries to foster a love of reading. Differentiated reading programmes are provided for pupils experiencing difficulties. There are many samples displayed of pupil process writing and writing for different audiences and due attention is paid to the development of handwriting skills.

- Learning outcomes in Mathematics are very good. The school plan is implemented in a highly effective and consistent manner. Teaching and learning is strongly underpinned by the use of a range of suitable resources, activity-based methodologies and problem-solving approaches. The programme is carefully differentiated in the various multi-class settings to cater for individual pupil differences.
• The lessons observed in Geography, the samples of pupil work reviewed and teacher planning indicate that the content of the SESE programme is closely aligned to the structure and content of the Primary School Curriculum at all class levels. The teachers successfully link local studies with the wider environment and pupils discuss the various topics with knowledge and understanding. Geographical investigation skills are incrementally developed through teacher-directed class discussion, project work, pupil participation in a local environmental project run by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, field trips, and through the Green Schools programme.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Provision for children with special educational needs is inclusive and holistic. Programmes are planned collaboratively between class teachers and support teachers and individual education plans (IEPs) are devised for all children in receipt of resource teaching. Parents are consulted during the formulation of IEPs and it is advised that they be provided with a copy of the document for their information. Learning targets are regularly reviewed and due consideration is taken of professional reports.

• A staged approach is taken to the provision of learning support and appropriate teaching methods are used. Very good use is made of assessment data in selecting pupils for learning support and in monitoring pupil progress.

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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 Board of Management of Brideswell National School would like to thank the inspector for the report on our school and for the professional manner in which she did her work. The Board welcomes the fact that the school is functioning very effectively and that there is a high standard of education provided for the pupils. The report is an accurate reflection of the hard work which is presently being completed by staff in our school. The Board congratulates the staff, parents and pupils for their co-operation.

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) The Board will prepare an annual report which will be furnished to the school community. The Board will also draw attention to the high standards of numeracy and literacy in our school.

(2) The school will analyse its assessment data at whole school level.

(3) The Parents’ Association have subscribed to the text-a-parent service, organised an information night and will make regular contributions to the school newsletter.