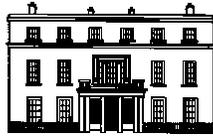


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT
St. Brigid's Boy's National School,
Mart Lane, Foxrock, Dublin 18
Uimhir rolla: 16352U

Date of inspection: 23 May 2013



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

1. Introduction

St. Brigid's Boys' National School is situated on Mart Lane, Foxrock in Co. Dublin and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It caters for boys from junior infants to sixth class. The attendance of the 482 pupils on roll is generally very good. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The inclusive, welcoming and affirming school atmosphere
- The strong leadership and commitment provided by the board of management
- The very effective leadership and management of the principal
- The very good standards of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
- The commitment of pupils to learning and high levels of good behaviour
- The sense of school community and common purpose shared by all stakeholders
- The active support provided by the parents' association and the wider parent body
- The broad and balanced range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences provided for the pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To augment the pupils' learning further, the extension of the range of opportunities for independent higher-order learning and an enhancement of approaches to assessment for learning are recommended.
- The provision for special educational needs pupils should be reconfigured to ensure more cohesion for pupil learning. The potential for in-class support and team teaching should be exploited as part of this reconfiguration.
- It is recommended that the board of management review its enrolment policy, to ensure that future enrolment levels are better matched to the available classroom accommodation.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management provides very good leadership to the school community and is very supportive of the work of the school. Members of the board have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and discharge these effectively. Regular meetings are held at which the board examines and ratifies policies, discusses pupil progress and at which regular financial reports are presented. Very good structures to communicate with the wider school community, which ensure a shared sense of purpose, have been developed.

- The board has led a significant programme of maintenance and the original school building and overall site have been cared for to a high standard. The school has sixteen mainstream classrooms and is located on a restricted site. In recent years, enrolments in the school have increased so that seventeen mainstream classroom teachers are currently employed. It is recommended that the board of management review its enrolment policy, to ensure that future enrolment levels are better matched to the available classroom accommodation and to guarantee the most favourable class size possible. This review should take place in consultation with the patron and should be part of a larger examination of the strategic development of the school.
- Currently the seventeenth classroom teacher is used to provide support to pupils across a range of curricular areas, including higher-achieving pupils. This resource should be prioritised for deployment within the junior classes.
- The principal is a very effective, highly organised leader and manager, who ensures that positive relationships are central to the educational process. He cultivates an open atmosphere and has a very good awareness of the skills and talents of individual members of staff. He has a clear focus on upholding the high standards achieved in the school and is a reflective practitioner. In questionnaires, parents agree that the school is well run.
- The principal is well supported by a sizeable in-school management team. Members of this team possess a wide range of skill and expertise and carry out their duties with diligence. Regular meetings are held where effective decision making and planning for school priorities is facilitated. The team has identified the need to re-examine the configuration of duties. In so doing, greater focus should be placed on the review and monitoring functions of the in-school management team's roles as curriculum leaders.
- The parents' association provides very good support to the school. It has developed strong channels of communication and organises several major events during the year that enhance the sense of community in the school. The wider parent body reported a very high level of satisfaction with the work of the school through parent questionnaires.
- The school environment is very welcoming and affirming. The secretary, caretaker and other ancillary staff add to this atmosphere and effectively support the day-to-day operation of the school. Classrooms and corridors contain attractive displays and the wide selection of very good resources is well managed. The school is currently considering the provision of additional resources to support individual pupil learning through ICT.
- The management of pupils is of a very high quality and ensures that pupils are interested in learning, have high levels of motivation and are extremely well behaved. In questionnaires pupils are positive about the school and recognise that they are achieving well.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of administrative and organisational planning is good and all required policies are in place. It would be timely for the school to develop a strategic plan for a cyclical review of policies to allow for renewed engagement by the stakeholders and to ensure that policies mirror the good practices of the school.
- The quality and level of curriculum planning is commendable. In the case of some curricular plans, there is a need for closer alignment between constituent parts and for plans to reflect initiatives that are a feature of effective classroom practice. A recent commendable review of individual teacher planning has been completed which enables

teachers to focus their planning on outcomes and skills. As this is extended and developed further, greater clarity of learning outcomes can be achieved.

- The school has commenced a robust, evidence based self-evaluation into its provision in literacy and numeracy. Good initial steps have been taken in both curricular areas. As the school develops its self-evaluation process, it is essential that clear targets with explicit mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating improvements are developed.
- 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 compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. During the evaluation, the lessons witnessed were well structured, resourced and paced and were characterised by the use of a wide range of teaching strategies which ensured very good levels of pupil engagement. Pupils are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum and have access to a wide range of extra curricular opportunities. To further enhance the pupils' learning, there is a need to extend the range of opportunities for independent pupil learning with an emphasis on higher-order skills. Further consideration should also be given to maximising the use of ICT as a learning tool for pupils.
- Tá caighdeán na múinteoireachta, na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge go maith, le samplaí de shár chleachtais breathnaithe. Tá timpeallacht mhaith cruthaithe don Gaeilge sa scoil agus baintear dea-usáid as drámaíocht, cluichí, mím, dánta, rannta, amhráin, obair bheirte agus caint na maidine chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Chun chur leis na dea-chleachtais siúd, moltar deiseanna sa bhreis a thabhairt do na daltaí fíor chumarsáid neamhspleách a dhéanamh. Léann agus scríobhann na daltaí ar chaighdeán inmholta le líofacht agus suim. D'fhonn cur le scileanna na ndaltaí, ba cheart úsáid a bhaint as réimse ábhar léitheoireachta níos leithne agus béim sa bhreis a chur ar an saor scríbhneoireacht. Tá gá le réimse níos leithne cur chuige measúnaithe, chun gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí a mheas.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good, with samples of very good practice observed. A good school environment has been created for Irish and use is made of drama, games, mime, poems, pair work and 'caint na maidine' to teach the language. To add to these good practices, it is recommended that pupils are provided with further opportunities for independent communication. Pupils read and write at a commendable level with fluency and interest. To further develop their skills, a wider range of reading approaches should be used and more emphasis should be placed on free writing. There is need for a wider range of assessment approaches to assess pupil achievement.

- The quality of teaching in English is high. The good practices observed included purposeful vocabulary development, a graded approach to the teaching of reading, *buddy reading*, use of novels as core texts as well some examples of the teaching of comprehension skills. The level of pupil attainment is very good. To further develop and build on these practices, the range of reading approaches employed should be extended and embedded. The school has identified the development of the writing process across a range of genres as an area for development and commendable work is in evidence in classrooms based on the agreed action plan. As this plan is progressed, further attention should be given to the teaching and learning of writing as part of an integrated language programme.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Effective practices observed during the evaluation included very good focus on the language of mathematics, consistent approaches to problem solving, use of concrete materials, as well as direct links to mathematics in pupils' lives. To further enhance the provision in mathematics, greater focus should be placed on higher-order mathematical engagement such as open-ended and collaborative problem solving and the creation of problems by pupils.
- The provision in Physical Education is highly commendable. Throughout their time in school pupils receive a broad and balanced programme of learning. Teachers ensure that physical education lessons have clear objectives, focus on skill and language development, integrate with other areas of learning and are enjoyable and appropriately structured. The curricular provision for physical education is complemented by a broad range of extra curricular opportunities.
- The assessment practices in the school are good. Trends in standardised tests are examined at a whole-school level and individual teachers use a range of assessment methods. Examples of commendable practices include the tracking of individual pupil achievement, the use of skill-based checklists, the provision of detailed formative feedback, as well as some use of portfolios. To further develop assessment at all levels, it is recommended that effective practices are shared and that whole-school approaches to assessment for learning are developed.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school where all pupils are valued and supported. The school has a large special education needs (SEN) team comprised of three learning support teachers and three resource teachers. This core team is supported by three shared teachers who provide thirteen additional hours of resource teaching as well as nine special needs assistants.
- Members of the team are diligent and are committed to the welfare as well as the social, emotional and educational needs of pupils. The quality of teaching in SEN settings is high and is specific and appropriate to the needs of individual pupils. A good range of diagnostic tests is in use and a good system is employed to track the progress of pupils.
- Support for pupils is generally provided in individual and small group settings and in some instances individual pupils are supported by a number of teachers. Given the size of the team, it is timely to consider a reconfiguration of provision to ensure cohesion for classroom teachers and for pupil learning. The potential for in-class support and team teaching should be exploited as part of this reconfiguration.

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