

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**St. Brigid's NS**  
**Greystones, Co. Wicklow**  
**Uimhir rolla: 16573N**

**Date of inspection: 18 April 2012**



## 1. Introduction

St. Brigid's National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school under the trusteeship of the Holy Faith Sisters and the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. Overall attendance of the 473 pupils is very good and is monitored carefully. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and four support teaching settings. 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 discharges its duties in an effective manner and demonstrates a clear commitment to the promotion of a high quality educational experience for pupils.
- The principal demonstrates effective leadership and management skills. A positive and cooperative school climate is created successfully.
- Teaching is of a high standard with some very good practice and the quality of pupils' learning outcomes generally is very good.
- Pupils are well behaved and engage in learning with interest.
- Relationships and communication with the school community are of a high standard.
- Pastoral care of pupils is commended in an inclusive and welcoming school environment.
- The level and management of resources is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The adoption of an action-planning approach, to address school priorities identified through the school's self-evaluation process, is recommended.
- The establishment of greater linkage between individual classroom planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum is recommended with a clearer focus on learning objectives and pupils' skill development.
- A more integrated and incremental whole-school approach to literacy development is advised.
- Information from ongoing assessment should be used to inform higher levels of differentiation to cater for the differing needs of individuals and groups, including the high achieving pupils.

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

- The board of management is constituted properly and discharges its duties in an effective manner. The board demonstrates clear commitment to the promotion of a high quality educational experience for pupils. Board members are well informed on matters relating to policy development, teaching and learning, and pupil achievement which are considered regularly.
- The principal demonstrates effective leadership skills and manages the school in a capable and strategic manner. Her empowering and reflective leadership style supports the gradual introduction of teaching and learning initiatives. Teachers' skills are nurtured purposefully and continuous professional development (CPD) is encouraged. She is ably supported by the in-school management team who attend to their duties conscientiously. To build on the capacity of this team, it is recommended that their role in coordinating and evaluating the impact of curriculum implementation on pupils' learning be strengthened. A positive school climate is established with open communication and the willingness of staff to undertake additional roles and responsibilities is highly praised.
- Relationships and communication with the school community are of a high standard. Praiseworthy communication channels ensure that parents are well informed about school matters. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and play a meaningful part in a commendable variety of in-school and after-school activities. The positive home-school partnership is reflected in the responses to parent questionnaires. Almost all parents believe that the school is well run, is welcoming of parents and that there is a good atmosphere.
- The overall management of pupils is very good. Pupils are well behaved, cooperative and engage in learning with interest. The school's proactive approach to the management of pupils, with regular monitoring and review of behaviour strategies, is commended. In the questionnaire responses, most pupils state that they feel safe, that they can talk to a teacher if upset and almost all report that they get on well with others. The proposed establishment of a students' council is a welcome development.
- The management of resources and space is very good. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard and are enhanced through attractive displays of the pupils' work. A very good range of teaching and learning resources is used effectively. Significant advances have been made in the use of ICT as a teaching resource, and the planned increase in the pupils' use of ICT is welcomed. The secretarial and caretaking support greatly assist in the efficient day to day administration of the school.

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

- The overall quality of school planning is good. The school plan is devised collaboratively and reviewed regularly. Positive steps towards a process of school self-evaluation have been instigated and the development of a three-year improvement plan has commenced. In order to optimise the impact of planning on teaching and learning, the adoption of an action-planning approach is recommended. In reviewing curriculum plans, a focus on clarity and consistency in teaching approaches and programme content will support the incremental development of pupils' learning.
- The overall quality of short-term planning varies. While the adoption of an agreed template is praised, a review of current approaches to short-term planning and the recording of

monthly progress is advised. In so doing, the establishment of greater linkage between individual classroom planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum is recommended with a clearer focus on objectives, skills and specific needs of pupils.

- 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

- Teaching is of a high standard with some very good practice. Talk and discussion is well managed and pair and group work is used in most classes. Some fine examples of structured team-teaching approaches are employed productively and this approach is worthy of extension. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes is generally very good. In their questionnaire responses, almost all pupils confirm that explanations are clear. In order to secure ongoing achievement of agreed literacy and numeracy targets, further use of independent, discovery and group learning opportunities is recommended
- A good variety of assessment approaches are in use throughout the school and some purposeful use of assessment outcomes to inform programmes of learning is evident. This good practice should be extended. Information from ongoing assessment should be used to inform higher levels of differentiation to cater for the differing needs of individuals and groups, including the high achieving pupils.
- Tá samplaí fóna de theagaisc agus d'fhoghlaim na Gaeilge le sonrú tríd an scoil. Tá moladh tuillte ag an bhfoireann don obair atá á dhéanamh aici ar chultúr Gaelach a fhorbairt agus ar dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a chothú. Baineann na hoidí úsáid as raon stáitéisí agus acmhainní oiriúnacha. Cé go bhfuil foclóir breá leathan ar eolas ag an gcuid is mó de na daltaí agus go léiríonn siad tuiscint chuí, labhraíonn an chuid díobh siad le heaspa muiníne agus cumais. Bunaítear an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht ar an iomlán ar na leabhair shaothair. I roinnt ranganna tugtar deiseanna do na daltaí scríbhneoireacht phearsanta a chumadh agus raon níos leithne léitheoireachta a léamh. Tá an dea-chleachtas seo le moladh. Chun cabhrú leis an sealbhú teanga, moltar na scileanna teanga a chomhtháthú ar bhealach níos nádúrtha. Ní mór breis treoracha a chur sa phlean scoile chun aire a dhíriú ar leanúnachas agus ar dhul chun cinn céimniúil ó rang go rang.

*Good examples of practice in the teaching and learning of Irish are evident throughout the school. The teachers are commended for their work in developing an Irish culture and in promoting a positive attitude to the Irish language. Teachers use a range of suitable approaches and resources. While most pupils have a wide vocabulary range and demonstrate appropriate understanding, many lack confidence and confidence in speaking. Reading and writing are primarily based on the workbooks. In some classes pupils are provided with opportunities to create personal writing and to read a broader range of texts. This good practice is praised. To assist language acquisition, a more natural linkage of language skills is recommended. The school plan should include additional guidance to ensure incremental continuity and progression from class to class.*

- High quality teaching and learning is evident in English. The school's multi-strategy approach to the promotion of pupils' reading competence is lauded. Reading standards generally are very high and pupils' personal reading is promoted productively. In their questionnaires, most pupils report that they are doing well at reading. A majority of pupils communicate appropriately across a range of topics and themes and in most classes they recite a range of poetry with expression. Some fine examples of pupils' personal and independent writing in a number of genres are in evidence. The school's prioritisation of

the development of comprehension and oral language skills is welcomed. In order to maximise the impact of proposed initiatives on pupils' learning, a more integrated, incremental whole-school approach is advised.

- Overall, teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Aspects of best practice include, explicit teaching of core concepts, application of Mathematics to real life and the use of cooperative tasks. The analysis and use of information collated from school-based data underpins purposeful initiatives. Team-teaching differentiated approaches, which cater for the varying ability levels of pupils, are commended and worthy of further development. A majority of pupils surveyed believe they are doing well at Mathematics. Praiseworthy school-wide approaches to problem solving and mental Mathematics have been agreed and their consistent implementation will support ongoing improvement in these areas.
- The teaching of Physical Education is carried out primarily by external tutors in the majority of classes. During the evaluation, lessons taught by class teachers were well structured, resourced and in the main implemented effectively. Suitable emphasis is placed on skill development and pupils' active engagement in activities is fostered. The promotion of a positive, inclusive attitude to sport and the balance of competitive and fun activities are commended. Staff members, with the support of parents, demonstrate laudable commitment to the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In the pending review, a more cohesive approach to planning and provision is advised.

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

- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are supported by a committed team. Pupils experience being educated in an inclusive, welcoming environment and pastoral care is commendable. Lessons are appropriately structured, well resourced and are characterised by affirming teacher-pupil interactions. Positive pupil engagement levels are evident.
- Effective communication structures exist between SEN personnel, school staff and parents. Education programmes are in place for pupils in receipt of resource support. The use of a broader range of diagnostic tests, as identified as a school priority, is recommended. This will facilitate the setting of more specific, measurable targets. In reviewing provision, EAL practice should be documented and further consolidation and formalisation of the following are advised; the staged approach to support for pupils, the development of individual profile and learning profiles and the roles and responsibilities of personnel.

*Published October 2012.*

# **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 St Brigid's National School, Greystones, has considered the Whole School Evaluation Report and is pleased to accept it as the Final Report, which is available for publication.

The Board of Management wishes to record its appreciation of the dedication and hard work of the Inspection Team and of the highly professional and courteous manner in which they undertook their task.

The Board is happy to note the very positive statements in the Report in relation to:

- Our clear commitment to a high quality educational experience for all pupils.
- The overall management of the school and the effective leadership of the School Principal and ISM team.
- The high standard of teaching, pastoral care and generally very good quality of pupils' learning outcomes.
- The very good level of pupil behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning.
- The high standard of parental involvement and communication within the school community.

The report contains a number of recommendations in relation to the extension and development of existing good practices in the school. A number of these recommendations coincide with areas for development identified in the school's self-evaluation process. St Brigid's has always been committed to the promotion of continuous improvement in the school and so the recommendations of the Inspection Team are very welcome.

**Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

We continue to be engaged in a process of self evaluation and action planning in order to achieve a:

- More integrated and incremental approach to literacy.
- Greater linkage between individual teacher planning, the school plan and the primary curriculum.
- Clearer focus on learning objectives and skill development.
- Whole school focus on assessment particularly as a means of informing higher levels of differentiation.