Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Brighde
Tooreen, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 16756V

Date of inspection: 9 May 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Brighde is a rural school which caters for boys and girls from infants to sixth class. It has a current enrolment of 92 pupils and a trend of increasing enrolment. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. The school had an incidental inspection in November 2010. 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.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- Teaching across the curriculum is of a very high standard.
- The quality of pupil attainment in literacy and Mathematics is very good.
- The quality of pupils’ spoken Irish is very good. They can express themselves accurately in different tenses using a rich vocabulary.
- The pupils experience a very rich musical education and excel in choral work. A praiseworthy emphasis is placed on local musical heritage.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal is hardworking, dedicated and inspiring. She promotes the highest standards of teaching and learning across the school.
- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. They are used efficiently and effectively to support teaching and learning.
- The quality of pupil management is very good. The pupils present as confident, enthusiastic learners who are expressive and respectful in their interactions.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the school review its current provision for learning support/resource to ensure each member of the special-education team has a clear understanding of the role and to ensure they carry out this role in line with best practice.
- It is recommended that the very successful approaches used by individual teachers in different subject areas be discussed at whole-school level, with a view to establishing whole-school approaches.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Meetings are held regularly. Roles and responsibilities are evenly distributed. Effective leadership by the chairperson has ensured that the school is maintained to the highest standard.
The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal is an inspiring leader. Her capacity for work and dedication to her staff and pupils is highly commendable. She promotes the highest standards of teaching and learning across the school. She is supported in her work by the equally effective and diligent deputy principal and special-duties teacher.

The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school is very well resourced and resources are used very efficiently. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is particularly effective.

The quality of the management of home-school communication is good. The school has a dynamic parents’ association that does extensive fundraising for the school. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually and written reports are supplied to parents at the end of the school year. In response to a questionnaire they completed as part of this evaluation, a large majority of parents agree that the school is well run.

The quality of pupil management is very good. The pupils present as confident and enthusiastic learners. They are expressive and spontaneous in their interactions and display high levels of respect for their teachers and classmates. In a questionnaire they completed as part of this evaluation, a large majority of pupils reported that they know the school and classroom rules and that teachers talk to them about dealing with bullying.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. The school has recently appointed a new teacher due to increased enrolment and is currently reviewing curricular plans to reflect this. Considering the very successful approaches to teaching and learning in individual classrooms, teachers are encouraged to discuss their practice with a view to establishing whole-school approaches. It is recommended that the school explore strategies for involving parents in the planning process.

The quality of teacher planning is good. Teachers prepare in a consistent and methodical manner. Monthly progress reports show very good continuity and progression in the programmes of work presented to pupils. It is recommended that differentiated objectives for pupils with different learning needs be included in teachers’ short-term plans.

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. Teaching is very focused. Lessons are very effectively structured and paced. They include activities to maximise pupil participation. Resources and visual aids are used skilfully to enhance understanding.
• Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama go han-mhaith sa Ghaeilge. Tá caighdeán na Gaeilge labhartha go han-ard. Tá na daltaí in ann caint go leanúnach, le fociór leathan, faoi théamaí éagsúla. Tá siad muinineach agus iad ag caint in aimsirí difríúla. Tá a saibhreas teanga le moladh. Léann na daltaí go crui nn le brí agus tuiscint. Ag tabhairt caighdeán ard na ndaltaí san áireamh moltar obair s críofa níos dúshlánaí a sholáthar dóibh.

• The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. The standard of oral Irish is very high. Pupils can speak at length, using a wide vocabulary, about various themes. They are confident speaking in different tenses. The richness of their language is praiseworthy. Pupils read accurately with meaning and understanding. Considering the high standards of the pupils it is recommended that more challenging written work be undertaken with them.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Pupils can express themselves clearly using a rich vocabulary. The level of pupil interest in reading and their knowledge of books is commendable. Practices such as the use of big books and class novels, reading aloud to pupils and presenting well-stocked class libraries have contributed to this success. It is recommended that teachers consider differentiated literacy activities to accommodate the range of abilities in each class. Pupils are given regular opportunities to engage in writing tasks. The quality of such writing is very good. The writing process is successfully implemented across the school and final drafts of pupils’ work are displayed.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are advantageously linked to pupils’ lives and experiences. Teachers place a very effective emphasis on skill development. They teach the language of Mathematics consistently and pupils use accurate vocabulary when discussing mathematical processes. Resources, including ICT, are used very successfully to enhance teaching and learning. A variety of effective methodologies is used to actively engage pupils in their learning, most notably station teaching. Teachers should now agree a whole-school approach to problem-solving.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is very good. The pupils experience a very rich musical education and excel in choral work. They learn the tin-whistle from first class. A praiseworthy emphasis is placed on appreciating the local musical heritage. All strands of the Music curriculum are taught very competently with an effective focus on the musical elements. The very successful integration of Music with other curricular areas greatly enhances the musical experience of the pupils.

• The quality of assessment is very good. Early-intervention strategies are based on the results of the Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP) and the Middle Infants Screening Test (MIST). Teachers carry out routine tests and tasks across the curriculum. Standardised tests are administered annually to assess individual pupils’ performance in literacy and numeracy. Individual pupil performance is tracked from year to year. A start has been made on analysing standardised test scores.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The school has access to two shared learning-support/resource teachers, neither of whom is based in the school. Both teachers have established very positive relations with their pupils. The overall quality of teaching is fair, but varies considerably between teachers. The very good practice observed during the course of the evaluation included the use of diagnostic and screening tests to identify pupil’s specific needs and the use of
appropriate methodologies and resources to scaffold learning. It is recommended that the provision be reviewed at whole-school level to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the role of the learning support/resource teacher and to ensure that good practice is shared. Meetings between the learning-support/resource teachers should take place on a regular basis. It is also recommended that the school provide in-class support for pupils with different needs in an inclusive setting.

- Individual education plans (IEP) and pupil profiles for the current term were prepared by both teachers, although there was no evidence to show that this is the established practice of both teachers. It is recommended that the procedure for completion of such plans be standardised within the school to include the use of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timed) targets. It is further recommended that parents be given a copy of their child’s IEP.

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