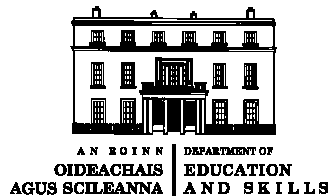


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Christian Brothers Primary School**  
**Dundalk, Co. Louth**  
**Uimhir rolla: 17195M**

**Date of inspection: 19 September 2013**



## 1. Introduction

The Christian Brothers Primary School in Dundalk, Co. Louth is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Archdiocese of Armagh. School enrolment has grown steadily throughout the last decade. There are currently 427 pupils enrolled and they are distributed across 16 mainstream classes. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and five support-teaching settings. While a whole-school policy has been devised and is consistently implemented to promote positive attendance among pupils there remains a pattern of poor attendance among an identified cohort. It is recommended that additional strategies be adopted to address this issue. During this whole-school evaluation, provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Science was inspected.

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 school is characterised by a welcoming, caring and industrious atmosphere.
- The board of management effectively supports the organisation and development of the school.
- The quality of organisational and instructional leadership within the school is very high.
- Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour and praiseworthy learning outcomes in the curricular areas evaluated.
- Strong teamwork and effective use of assessment data underpin the very good school self-evaluation practices.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is highly commendable.
- The promotion of positive home-school relationships together with the support of the parents' association and parent body is notable.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that additional strategies be adopted to address the poor attendance of an identified cohort of pupils.
- To enhance current good practices for oral language development additional opportunities should be provided to optimise pupils' usage of specific vocabulary and skills. Greater consideration should be given to the monitoring of progress in oral language development.
- The format of teachers' monthly progress records should be reviewed to facilitate closer monitoring of curriculum implementation and progression in learning.

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

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Appropriate procedures are well-established to ensure the board fulfils its responsibilities in a proactive and competent manner. Board members share their individual skills purposefully to support the organisation and development of the school. A key priority for the current board is the advancement of the building project.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal's effective leadership and management skills are reflected in the provision of a learner-centred, well-ordered learning environment. He has successfully nurtured a collaborative, affirming culture within this school community. The principal is ably assisted by a dedicated and efficient deputy principal. Together they promote high standards in teaching and learning. Post holders' conscientious fulfilment of a suitable range of duties contributes significantly to the high quality of provision within the school. Staff members willingly take on additional duties and display high levels of commitment to the pupils and the school.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. High levels of engagement in professional development and sharing of good practice by teaching staff are noted. Ancillary staff makes a valuable contribution to the culture and organisation of the school. School grounds and facilities are maintained extremely well. A wide range of resources is used effectively to support teaching and learning.
- A suitable range of communication channels, including a website, has been established. Parent representatives consulted during the whole school evaluation (WSE) attested to positive home-school communication. The responses to the parent questionnaires administered during the WSE indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with the school. Valuable support is provided by the parents' association and parent community within this school community.
- The quality of management of pupils is very good. Affirming pupil-teacher interactions were in evidence during the evaluation. Pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation which is also reflected in the pupil questionnaires issued during the evaluation. Pupil participation in decision making processes is effectively facilitated through their involvement in the Green Schools programme and the pupils' council.

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

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. A positive culture of professional reflection is evident and school self-evaluation practices are well established. Appropriate priorities have been identified in the three-year improvement plan and suitable action plans have been devised based on a comprehensive analysis of assessment data. Ongoing review of progress should include a reframing of some improvement targets to ensure optimum specificity. The implementation of improvement initiatives has impacted positively on pupil learning with commendable progress evident across a number of curricular domains.
- A comprehensive suite of organisational plans inform the efficient functioning of the school. Contextualised curricular plans provide appropriate guidance for the implementation of a balanced curriculum with due regard for school improvement priorities.

- The overall quality of teachers' short and long-term planning is high. It is recommended that the school review its current format of recording monthly progress reports to facilitate closer monitoring of curriculum implementation and progression throughout the year and across classes.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán na foghlama agus an teagaisc sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith. Cuirtear béim láidir ar úsáid rialta na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil. Cuireann cur i bhfeidhm an phlean cuimsitheach go mór le foghlaim chéimniúil thorthúil na ndaltaí. Tá sé ar a gcumas raon leathan eiseamláirí teanga a úsáid go múnineach. Cé go mbaineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as modhanna múinte eagsúla moltar anois obair bheirte agus drámaíocht a leathnú ar fud na scoile chun saorchumarsáid na ndaltaí a fheabhsú a thuilleadh. Cuirtear leabhair Ghaeilge oiriúnacha ar fáil do na daltaí agus léann an chuid is mó acu le cruinneas agus le tuiscint. Tugtar deiseanna cuí do na daltaí saor-scríbhneoireacht éagsúil a chleachtadh. Moltar measúnú leanúnach a dhéanamh ar ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. A strong emphasis is placed on regular informal use of Irish. The implementation of the comprehensive development plan contributes significantly to pupils' fruitful incremental learning. They are able to confidently use a wide range of language. Although teachers use various methodologies effectively it is recommended that drama and pair-work be extended throughout the school to further enhance pupils' independent communication. Suitable books are made available to pupils and the majority of them read with accuracy and understanding. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in a variety of creative writing. It is recommended that ongoing assessment of pupils' progress in Irish be undertaken.*
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. To enhance current good practices for oral language development additional opportunities should be provided to optimise pupils' usage of specific vocabulary and skills. Closer monitoring of progress in oral language development is also recommended. Provision for poetry is of a high standard. The development of pupils' independent writing skills across a variety of genres is facilitated in a competent manner with due regard for creativity and the conventions of writing. A consistent whole-school approach to the development of spelling strategies has been carefully embedded.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very high. Lessons are well structured and content is effectively linked to the environment and life experience of the pupils. They are provided with suitable opportunities to use concrete resources. Commendable emphasis is placed on the development of their mental arithmetic and mathematical skills. Considerable attention is given to the incremental development of mathematical language and to the regular revision of mathematical concepts. Co-operative learning is used to good effect in some instances. There remains potential for its wider use throughout the school. Pupils' learning outcomes are very good and their progress is monitored in a systematic manner.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. A broad and balanced curriculum is implemented with regular opportunities for pupils to engage in

investigations and experiments. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' scientific skills which include observing, predicting and analysing. A commendable whole-school approach to promoting positive environmental awareness and care is reflected in the significant number of awards obtained by the school.

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers communicate high expectations to pupils and lessons are well structured and stimulating. A variety of methodologies is effectively deployed. Further use of pair-work is advised in some instances. The successful promotion of play-based methodologies in the infant classes is commendable. Carefully facilitated activity-based group-work was observed in many settings during the evaluation. Suitable differentiation approaches are deployed to cater for the range of pupils' abilities. A wide range of assessment strategies is used purposefully to monitor pupils' progress and to inform teaching and learning.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils is very good with commendable attention given to the enhancement of pupils' self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- Early identification of pupils with special educational needs is ensured through comprehensive monitoring systems and close collaboration with all partners. Supplementary support for pupils with special educational needs in literacy and numeracy is currently provided using an appropriate balance of in-class and withdrawal approaches in accordance with pupils' prioritised needs. Carefully designed team teaching models have been successfully implemented with early intervention initiatives showing commendable effectiveness on pupil progress.
- The provision of supplementary support for pupils who have English as an additional language is characterised by conscientiousness and care. However, the current model of providing all support by withdrawing pupils from class should be reviewed to ensure closer alignment with pupils' needs and a more integrated element of whole-school provision.
- Teachers plan conscientiously for the delivery of relevant educational programmes for pupils requiring additional support. The formal involvement of pupils in devising individual educational programmes is highly commended.
- Teachers use a wide range of resources effectively to stimulate pupils' interest. Lessons observed during the evaluation were characterised by high quality teacher-pupil interactions with appropriate consolidation of pupils' learning. It is evident that pupils benefit significantly from the support provided.
- The school staff has successfully established a range of interventions which foster an inclusive caring culture for pupils. The holistic development of pupils is supported through a suitable range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

# **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 welcomes the very positive report of the inspectorate which acknowledges the positive welcoming atmosphere of the school and the very high quality of teaching, learning, team work and leadership.

The Board appreciates the very high satisfaction rate among parents and children as indicated in the questionnaire responses.

The Whole-School Community found the W.S.E. process to be a very positive, affirming and rewarding process.

**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 of Management and staff of the school are working with outside agencies in tackling the attendance problems associated with an identified cohort of children.
- 2) New formats of Monthly Reports are being phased in.
- 3) Further oral language development strategies are being adapted throughout the school.