An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Náisiúnta Bhrighde,
Meath Hill, Drumconrath,
Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla: 17220I

Date of inspection: 23 May 2012
1. Introduction

Scoil Náisiúnta Bhrighde is a rural, co-educational school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath. There are 80 pupils currently enrolled in the school. Overall attendance levels are good. The school has three mainstream class teachers. A learning support/resource teacher is based in the school and shared with one other school. 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 very well-organised and run. The quality of the work of the board of management and of in-school management, led very ably by the principal, is very good.

- The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard, providing a stimulating environment for pupils and staff.

- The teachers are very conscientious and committed in all aspects of their work.

- The school-wide focus on the development of pupils' literacy and communicative abilities, in both English and Irish, is commendable and pupils' learning in Mathematics and Social, Personal and Health Education is very good.

- The quality of additional supports for pupils is of a very good standard.

- Parents are very supportive of the school and indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Some current whole-school curriculum plans require review and development.

- Building on strategic planning already established, systematic school self-evaluation procedures and practices should be implemented.

- Assessment practice should be developed further and provide for greater analysis of pupils' outcomes in standardised tests to inform learning and teaching.
3. **Quality of School Management**

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. It is properly constituted, is very supportive of the school community and meets regularly. Its members work together effectively. The board has overseen significant improvements to the school grounds and buildings, has ensured that a broad range of learning and teaching resources are provided to the school and maintains strong links with the parents.

- The quality of in-school management is very good. Day-to-day operation and leadership of the school are effective and strategic planning for the development of the school as a learning community, led by the principal, is valuable. Very commendably, the principal, deputy principal and other staff members work collaboratively and share leadership and management responsibilities appropriately.

- Very good quality resources have been obtained to facilitate effective learning and teaching in all settings. A range of information and communications technology (ICT) resources, concrete materials, charts and pictorial materials are used productively. Resources are maintained carefully. Classrooms, corridors and circulation areas are used effectively to display pupils’ work.

- Communication and collaboration between staff members, the board of management and the parents is of very good quality and parents are very supportive of the work of the school. The school is supported by a dedicated and hard-working parents’ association. The parents’ association might now wish to consider affiliation to the National Parents Council Primary (NPC) in order to avail of formal training opportunities and develop further their important role in the school community. In questionnaire responses, all parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school is welcoming of parents and most agreed that the school regularly seeks the views of parents on school matters.

- The management of pupils is very good. A very respectful relationship between pupils and teachers is maintained assiduously. The quality of pupils’ engagement in lessons observed during the whole school evaluation was highly commendable. In questionnaire responses, all parents agreed or strongly agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school. Pupils’ questionnaire responses indicate that they enjoy very good relationships with their teachers and that they judge their school to be a good school.

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

- The quality of whole-school administrative policies is very good. These outline procedures and practices clearly. Curriculum plans for all subjects have been prepared. Strategic action planning and setting of development targets are practised. These processes, which include strategic plans for promoting skills in literacy and numeracy, are commendable. School self-evaluation processes are currently at a relatively informal stage. However, the teachers demonstrate commitment to on-going school improvement through discussion about teaching methodologies and through reflection on their own practice. There is evidence of sharing of the efficacy and impact of programmes taking place at staff meetings. The school is well positioned to engage in a more formal self-evaluation process and it is recommended that this be engaged.

- Curriculum plans for all subjects have been completed, are ratified and incorporate dates for review. Some plans are suitably clear and guiding. The impact of some other plans, for example in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), needs to be improved so that progression of content within the spiral curriculum design is supported. A greater focus on agreed pupil learning outcomes and benchmarks for each class level in subject areas would be beneficial as plans are reviewed and developed.
• The quality of classroom planning is very good. Plans are prepared carefully and appropriate learning objectives are outlined in them. The plans ensure progression and challenge for each grade in the multi-grade classroom settings. Teachers’ practical preparation for their lessons is very commendable. Monthly progress records (cuntas mhiosula) are maintained appropriately.

• 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

• Léiríodh dea-chleachtais i bhfoighlaim agus i dteagasc na Gaeilge sna rangsheomraí uile. Cothaítear atmaisfear spreagúil agus dearcaidh dearfach i leith na teanga. Saibhronn oíd a gcuid ceachtanna trí acmhainní léirithe agus soláimhsithe a úsáid. Tá cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí á thorchuir goí leis an scoil agus tá sé ar chumas formhóir acu abairtí a struchtúrú go criúin. D’aithris daltaí raon cuí de dhánta, amhrán agus rann. Cleachtar gniomhaíochtaí luathléitheoireachta fiúntacha. Tugtar go struchtúrtha faoi theagasc na léitheoireachta agus forbráitear tuiscint le ceistí tábhachtach cuit. Leánn daltaí sleachta ó théacsleabhair le muinín agus crúnnaí sásúil. Chun cur le is an obair reatha, moltar go n-úsáidtear téacsanna fhiorleabhair agus acmhainní comhthreomhara sa litéitheoireacht. Cláraítear cleachtaithe feidhmíúla scribhneoireachta sna cóipleabhair agus bionn deiseanna scribhneoireachta cuit ag na daltaí. Amach anseo, b’fhéidir an obair seo a ghaoladh a thuilleadh le gniomháctaí le haghamhainní leathanaithe sa léitheoireacht. Good practices in the learning and teaching of Irish were demonstrated in all classrooms. An encouraging atmosphere and a positive attitude to the language are nurtured. Teachers enrich their lessons by using illustrative and manipulative resources. Pupils’ communicative abilities are developed fruitfully through the school and most are capable of structuring sentences accurately. They recited an appropriate range of poems, songs and verses. Worthwhile early reading activities are practised. Teaching of reading is progressed in a structured manner and understanding is developed through appropriate, challenging questioning. Pupils read extracts from textbooks with confidence and suitable accuracy. To add to current practice it is recommended that authentic book texts and parallel reading resources be used in reading. Functional writing activities are well covered and pupils have appropriate writing opportunities. Going forward, this work could be related to activities with the extended reading resources.

• Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are commendable. Oral language skills are developed conscientiously. Classrooms are well-prepared as print-rich environments and pupils are exposed to an appropriate range of differentiated reading material. Teachers demonstrate considerable skill in leading the development of pupils’ literacy skills. Effective early literacy experiences were evaluated, with early writing and reading being advanced with purpose. Pupils experience a structured and purposeful phonological and phonemic awareness programme up through the school. They read well and enthusiastically in accordance with their own competencies and abilities. Standardised test results indicate good standards are achieved in reading overall, with few pupils presenting currently with significant challenges and a number achieving very well. Continuing analysis of trends will be helpful. A broad range of writing tasks across the genres is pursued and good-quality examples were evident.

• The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are very well prepared with very satisfactory use made of concrete resources to support pupils’ learning. Mathematical skills and concepts are taught carefully. Well-differentiated grade specific delivery of lesson content was observed. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the acquisition of number facts, mental arithmetic and the
development of mathematical language in all classes. In tasks given many pupils demonstrated ready facility in completing oral mathematics problems in a selection of strands. Copybook work is monitored well.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very good. Lessons evaluated were integrated meaningfully and active learning methodologies predominated. The pupils were encouraged to reflect and to make choices. Monthly progress records (*cuntais mhíosúla*) indicate that a balanced programme across the strands is implemented. The positive climate established among the school community as a whole and the pleasant atmosphere in classrooms contribute significantly to the pupils’ development.

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good with the very good quality active and collaborative approaches, during which the quality of pupils’ experiences was high, being particularly commendable. All lessons evaluated were interesting, stimulating and taught with enthusiasm. Effective discrete grade level teaching is well-practised. In questionnaire responses, almost all pupils, who completed questionnaires, stated that their teachers explained things clearly in lessons. All parents strongly agreed or agreed that teaching is good in the school. Very good use was made of the interactive whiteboard in lessons evaluated, particularly to explain lesson content in interesting and engaging ways. Slightly more than half of pupils in questionnaire responses stated that they get to use computers and the interactive whiteboard most days. Strategies to involve pupils in manipulating information and communications technology (ICT) a little more directly in daily learning activity could be explored.

- Classroom assessment practices are valuable. Monthly progress records are very clear. Standardised tests in English are administered annually and from this year standardised tests in Mathematics will also be administered annually to relevant grades. A more formal whole-school analysis of standardised test results is recommended. Outcomes of that analysis should be considered in the light of teacher-designed classroom assessments to inform learning and teaching.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The access of pupils with special educational needs to the school and their participation in learning appropriate to their needs is very good. The inclusion of all pupils is promoted. Well-detailed individualised programmes of learning, prepared in consultation with class teachers and parents, facilitate the inclusion of pupils with additional needs in appropriate learning experiences. Suitable diagnostic tests are used to identify the specific needs of pupils.

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Very satisfactory strategies were observed with active learning approaches practised frequently. Teaching is well-focused and pupils are making suitable progress. While much supplementary support is provided on a withdrawal basis, the school has initiated an effective in-class support programme in Mathematics.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Effective home-school links are well-maintained and an open-door policy in engaging with parents is operated.

*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

During the course of the evaluation, the inspector established an excellent rapport with staff, pupils, Board of Management and parents. Hence, the inspection proved to be a positive experience for all concerned. The visit was marked by courtesy and respect but also by a comprehensive inspection of the work carried out in the school.

We are extremely pleased with the report and are delighted that it affirms the fact that the school is well organised and run, and that the parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school.

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

Regarding the recommendations, we intend to undertake a review and expansion of current whole school curriculum plans, in order to make them more school specific.

We have initiated school self-evaluation procedures for literacy and numeracy. This will be further developed for all areas of curriculum planning, in line with upcoming Department of Education guidelines.

All classes, not only those recommended, have had standardised tests in English and Maths administered. The results have been analysed and are being used to assist in our self-evaluation procedures and inform our policies and planning going forward.