

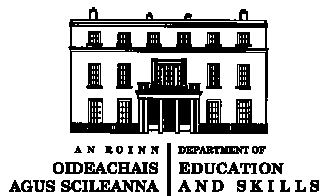
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Scoil Naomh Bhríde
Ballycroy, Westport, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 17532E**

Date of inspection: 23 May 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Bhríde is a two-teacher co-educational primary school, located in the village of Ballycroy, Co. Mayo. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school participates in the rural strand of the DEIS initiative and currently has an enrolment of twenty-eight pupils. One teacher provides support to pupils with special educational needs. Enrolment trends are stable and recent data indicate that the attendance of most pupils is good, with evidence of considerable improvements in recent years.

In May 2013, a whole-school evaluation (WSE) took place in the school focussing on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama. 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 school accommodation is of a high quality.
- A positive and welcoming school atmosphere is in evidence. The teachers co-operate well with each other and the pupils are well behaved.
- Parents are supportive of the school.
- In English and Mathematics, some effective programmes and initiatives have been introduced recently to develop teachers' practice and to raise pupils' attainment.
- In Mathematics, standards of teaching and learning are good.
- The quality of learning support provision for pupils with needs at stage two is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board should take steps to ensure a more continual focus on the school planning processes and it should explore further methods of communicating school-related information to parents.
- To achieve the sustained and progressive development which the school needs, the external supports and networking opportunities available to the school should be identified and accessed. The principal should take the lead role in this.
- Formal duties, including curriculum-related duties, should be allocated to the special duties post.
- In English, further work is required to address the substantial need for development in pupils' writing skills that exists currently.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá gá le feasúcháin a dhéanamh i ngnóthachtaí na ndaltaí sna ceithre scil teanga. *In Irish, there is a need for improvements to be made in pupils' attainment in the four language skills.*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers' practices in planning, in differentiation and in using assessment data need to be further developed. |
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3. Quality of School Management

- Overall, the school is managed effectively.
- The board of management is properly constituted and regular meetings of the board are held. Minutes of meetings need to be documented more carefully in order to provide a clear record of matters discussed and decisions made. In 2012, a wide range of school organisational policies was ratified. Many of these policies are generic in nature and additional work is needed to tailor these policies to the school's context and to outline school procedures in a clear manner. To ensure that this work is carried out in a more sustained and continuous manner, it is recommended that the board initiate an annual review and ratification process regarding an agreed number of policies. The board should also assume a broader role in the DEIS planning process.
- School accounts have been certified for a number of years and the treasurer provides regular financial reports. In 2009, the school was relocated to a newly-constructed building on a new site. The current and previous management, together with school personnel, are highly commended for their work in providing high-quality accommodation which has yielded considerable benefits for the pupils and school community.
- Responses received from parents through questionnaires were generally positive and it is reported that parents have good involvement in school activities. However, it is evident that further communication with the parent body would be beneficial. This could be achieved through the school's website which is currently being developed. It is advised that the board of management produce an annual report on the operation of the school and facilitate the establishment of a parents' association. The school information booklet, which is distributed to parents, could be developed further by providing more specific details about the school.
- The principal has demonstrated noteworthy leadership through her creditable work in updating teaching materials for use in the school and in leading the school building project. The principal should now focus on developing the instructional leadership aspect of the role, placing the objective of meeting the prevailing needs of pupils at the forefront. In setting about this, there is a need for a more explicit focus on leading learning and improving pupils' attainment in a sustained manner, on using assessment data more effectively and on developing the school planning process. Under the principal's leadership, the range of external supports and networking opportunities available to the school should be explored and availed of, as appropriate.
- The special duties teacher works diligently on practical and pastoral tasks. In accordance with *Circular 07/03*, the board of management should ensure that clearly-defined duties, including curriculum-related responsibilities, are allocated to the special duties post.
- The pupils are well behaved and are eager to discuss their learning and to answer questions. In addition to the measures which are currently in place to encourage and reward pupils, the holding of more regular whole-school assemblies to celebrate pupils' progress and achievements would be beneficial. Responses to pupil questionnaires issued during the evaluation were positive.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning and of the school's work in the DEIS planning process is satisfactory overall. Improvements have been made recently in the level of parental involvement in the school and in pupils' attendance. To ensure that these levels of improvement are sustained, it is recommended that the school continue to develop strategies to promote regular pupil attendance. In the areas of literacy and numeracy, there is scope for the targets set to be more specific and measurable.
- The school's work in school self-evaluation is progressing well. Some priorities have been identified in literacy and teachers have attended training in programmes including *First Steps*. The challenge for the school in this phase of school self-evaluation is to ensure that such programmes have a measurable impact on pupil attainment. Achieving more cohesive links between planning, teaching and assessment will assist the school in this regard.
- The mainstream class teachers compile long-term plans, fortnightly plans and monthly progress reports. The quality of these documents is adequate. In Irish and English, plans need to make specific reference to the precise vocabulary, phrases, comprehension strategies and writing skills which will be addressed in each period of instruction. Some objectives and activities are included in teachers' plans. These are focused primarily on the pupils with average attainment and ability levels and the level of instruction is based predominantly on exercises from graded text books and work books. This planning does not always adequately provide for the pupils who experience difficulties, and as a result, their needs are not addressed systematically in the mainstream classroom. As outlined in Primary Circular 24/03, the class teachers should make specific plans for extra help within the normal classroom setting for pupils with needs at stage one. This planning should clearly outline how lessons and activities will be differentiated to match pupils' abilities and to support their needs. It is recommended that the school ensure that its practices are consistent with stage one of the continuum of support model and that the supports provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are accessed as appropriate.
- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching ranges from fair to good. Some beneficial programmes have been introduced recently in English and Mathematics. To further develop practice, additional training in the teaching of Irish and Drama is recommended. In the senior room, more supportive resource materials should be displayed in Mathematics, together with vocabulary, phrases, grammar, verbs and commonly misspelt words in both English and Irish.
- The overall quality of pupil learning and achievement ranges from weak to very good. There is a need for further differentiated teaching to ensure that pupils who experience significant difficulties are taught at a suitable level. The central role currently played by text books needs to be reduced to allow for this approach.

- Pupils' copy books are monitored regularly and errors are noted. Standardised tests are administered and results are used to identify pupils who require stage-two support. Screening tests and the Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT) are used appropriately. Individual assessment folders are used to maintain pupils' test results, which are shared between teachers and with the pupils' parents. These procedures are implemented consistently. However, the data generated need to be used more effectively. Standardised test results should be analysed to isolate and identify aspects of the curriculum which require additional attention in the mainstream classroom. Where it is evident from test results and pupils' work in copy books that they experience difficulties with concepts or skills, teachers should note the difficulties and should, in their planning documents, outline the teaching and revision strategies required to consolidate these concepts or skills. At the time of the evaluation such practices were not clearly in evidence. The advice provided by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in the document *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools (2008)* would assist the school in developing strategies to use assessment data more effectively.

- Sonraítear caighdeán sásúil i dteagasc na Gaeilge agus sonraítear idir chaighdeáin laga agus shásúla i ngnóthachtáil na ndaltaí. Déanann na múinteoirí dea-iarrachtaí chun foclóir a mhúineadh agus a leathnú. Aithrisíonn na daltaí raon amhrán agus filíochta. Chun frásaí a mhúineadh agus a dhaingniú, tá gá le tuilleadh athráite sna ceachtanna agus le hionchur teanga sa bhreis ó na múinteoirí. De réir treoirlínte an churaclaim, moltar gan tús a chur leis an léitheoireacht agus scríbhneoireacht fhoirmiúil go dtí rang a dó. Sna hardranganna, léann na daltaí le líofacht réasúnta ach léiríonn siad deacrachtaí suntasacha leis an ngramadach agus i bhfreagairt ceisteanna bunaithe ar na téacsanna. Ina gcuid scríbhneoireachta, bíonn botúin bhunúsacha i struchtúr na n-abairtí, sa litriú agus in úsáid na mbriathar. Moltar clár cuimsitheach a leagan amach chun na deacrachtaí seo a réiteach.

A satisfactory standard is noted in the teaching of Irish and the standards achieved by pupils are between weak and satisfactory. Teachers make good efforts to teach and extend vocabulary. The pupils recite a range of songs and poems. To teach and consolidate phrases, there is a need for more repetition in lessons and for more language input from the teachers. In accordance with the curriculum guidelines, it is recommended that formal reading and writing should not be introduced until second class. In the senior classes, the pupils read with reasonable fluency but demonstrate significant difficulties with grammar and in answering questions based on texts. In their writing, there are basic mistakes in the structure of sentences, in spelling and in the use of verbs. It is recommended that a comprehensive programme be outlined to address these difficulties.

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. Good work is undertaken in oral language and in reading, and the standards achieved by pupils in these areas are generally good. Differentiated reading materials have been acquired recently and these are used effectively to develop reading fluency. Pupils would benefit from further teaching of comprehension strategies. In the junior classes, more intensive teaching and revision of letter formation skills is required. In the senior room, the written work produced by some pupils is good. However, this standard is not consistent and a number of pupils experience difficulties. Common errors are made frequently in the use of tenses, conventions of grammar, spellings and punctuation. Overall, pupils' writing is in need of substantial development through differentiated teaching and regular revision.
- Mathematics is taught successfully. Good work is carried out in the strand *Early Mathematical Activities*, and the *Maths Recovery* programme is used effectively. Lessons incorporate oral and mental mathematics, good discussions and the use of concrete materials. Calculators are not used at present. It is advised, in accordance with

curriculum guidelines, that calculators be introduced and used as an integral aspect of the programme in Mathematics from fourth class onwards. During the evaluation, pupils in the senior classes demonstrated fair to very good ability in answering questions on topics covered.

- The teaching of Drama is fair. Pupils take part in drama games, role play activities and character explorations. To enhance pupils' engagement and the overall effectiveness of lessons, it should be ensured that dramas are based on themes which are relevant to pupils' lives.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of the stage-two learning support provision is very good. Early intervention is ensured and work is undertaken with small groups of pupils. Diagnostic tests and screening tests are used very effectively and high-quality individual pupil learning profiles are prepared, which incorporate very clear learning targets. Concepts are taught and consolidated in a thorough manner. Daily notes of pupils' progress are maintained which indicate that pupils are making appropriate progress in this setting.
- It is recommended that the level of in-class support and team teaching be increased. This would allow additional pupils to benefit from the high-quality support provided and would enable teachers to engage in further co-operative planning ensuring consistency between the supports for pupils in the mainstream class setting and the support setting.

Published December 2013