

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

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

**Scoil Bhríde,**  
**Boyagh, Lifford, County Donegal**  
**Uimhir rolla: 17552K**

**Date of inspection: 09 November 2011**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

## 1. Introduction

Scoil Bhríde is a mainstream primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry. The thirty-five pupils are taught in two multi-grade classrooms. School attendance is very good. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS, Rural Band 2), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Drama 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 work of the board of management is effective and members are committed to continuous improvements in learning and teaching.
- The school is a very safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- Teachers work very diligently; they are very committed to their pupils and to their own professional development.
- School attendance is very good.
- The pupils present as happy and confident in their learning.
- The parents' association is very supportive of the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Classroom support plans should be implemented for pupils with special educational needs to link learning in the support setting to learning in the classroom.
- Assessment for learning strategies should be developed on a whole-school basis.
- Roll books and registers should be maintained in accordance with Department guidelines.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is effective. Members are committed to continuous improvement in learning and teaching. The board is commended for the development of the car park and playground. Development of classroom accommodation is now a priority. There is evidence of a collaborative approach to the review of policies and procedures.
- School leadership is good. Some aspects of administrative responsibility require further attention, however, including the maintenance of roll books and registers in accordance with Department guidelines. It is recommended that the pupils' yearly attendance figures

- are recorded in the school registers. The special duties post-holder contributes significantly to whole-school initiatives.
- The teaching staff comprises two mainstream teachers. Based elsewhere, a learning-support teacher visits the school for ten hours per week and a resource teacher attends four days per week for a total of six and a half hours. The commitment of teachers to the pupils' welfare and to their own professional development is praiseworthy. Two special needs assistants work very effectively in support of pupils with assessed special needs. The board employs, part-time, a secretary and a cleaner. There is a very good sense of team and shared responsibility among the staff.
  - There are commendable resources available to support literacy and there has been significant investment in information and communications technologies (ICT). While the building and grounds are maintained to a good standard, there is scope for development in the quality of the classroom accommodation. Currently, classroom size limits activity-based learning.
  - The management of relationships with the school community is very good. The parents' association works diligently to raise additional funding for school needs. Representatives reported that parents are satisfied with the school as a very safe and supportive learning environment. Responses to parental questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, show that all parents are happy with the school.
  - The overall management of pupils is good. They are valued and treated respectfully. Pupils' listening and organisational skills require further attention in the senior classroom, however. Responses to the pupils' questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that all enjoy supportive relationships with their teachers and feel safe in the classroom and in the playground.

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

- The quality of whole-school administrative planning is good. All policies should be signed and dated by the chairperson on ratification.
- Good-quality curriculum plans are in place for all subjects. Going forward, the use of planning grids is recommended to develop whole-school approaches in key areas of the Irish curriculum to ensure continuity in learning from the junior classes to the senior classes.
- An effective three-year DEIS action plan was in place for 2007-2010 and this identified appropriate targets with regard to improving the pupils' attendance, reading and numeracy skills as well as developing home-school partnerships. In compiling the next action plan, it is recommended that targets should be incorporated to strengthen performance in the measurement and shape and space strands of the Mathematics programme.
- Overall the quality of classroom planning is very good with highly praiseworthy planning noted in the junior classroom and in the support settings.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* (September 2011) without modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular

0065/2011 and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as a matter of priority.

## 5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Baineann caighdeán maith le múineadh agus le foghlaim na Gaeilge. Cé go bhfuil líofacht teanga mhaith a mhealladh ó na daltaí sna bunranganna, b'fhiú cumarsáid idir na daltaí a fhorbairt trí obair péire. Moltar a thuilleadh béime a chur ar fhorbairt na bhfoclóra, ar úsáid na mbriathra agus ar líofacht na ndaltaí sna hardranganna. Tá caighdeán maith léitheoireachta agus tuisceana bainte amach ag na ndaltaí. Cláraíonn na daltaí cleachtaí scríbhneoireachta go hordúil sna cóipleabhair sna bunranganna agus sna leabhair saothair sna hardranganna. B'fhiú, áfach, éispéiris níos leithne scríbhneoireachta a thabhairt do na daltaí sna hardranganna lasmuigh de na teascleabhair. Moltar *Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Rialta* a úsáid chun dul chun cinn na ndaltaí a mheas go caighdeánach.
- *The teaching and learning in Irish are of a good standard. While pupils' fluency in the language is developed well in the junior classroom, communication between the pupils should be developed through the use of pair work. It is recommended that further emphasis be placed on developing vocabulary, the use of verbs and pupils' fluency in the senior classroom. The pupils have reached a good standard of reading and understanding. Pupils record their written work neatly in copybooks in the junior classes and in workbooks in the senior classes. A wider writing experience, beyond the textbooks, should be provided to the pupils in the senior classroom. It is recommended that the Drumcondra Irish Test for Ordinary Primary Schools should be used to get a standardised measure of pupils' progress.*
- Provision for English is good with significant improvements noted in reading over the last three years. The teaching of phonological awareness and pre-reading skills in the junior classes is highly praiseworthy. In senior classes, the pupils' reading skills are progressed appropriately using graded reading schemes and a very good range of class novels. The teaching of poetry is commendable. Pupils' writing samples indicate satisfactory attainment in terms of spelling, vocabulary and content. However, the senior pupils' handwriting and writing style should be targeted for improvement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good overall. Team-teaching is used very effectively to support learning in the junior classroom with concrete materials being used very effectively to facilitate experiential learning. Oral Mathematics is very well attended in the senior classroom. Pupils are very enthusiastic about Mathematics and demonstrate good competency in tables and mental computation.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is commendable. In the junior classes pupils gain confidence in self expression through acting out scenarios based on well-known stories. In the senior classes the range of dramatic activities is widened appropriately to include techniques such as improvisation and thought tracking. Content is linked effectively to themes explored in other curricular areas. Pupils are highly enthused by Drama and engage very well in all activities. The *Balor Theatre* supports pupils' learning in Drama periodically through outreach projects.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Teachers work very diligently and use ICT effectively to support teaching and learning. Appropriate provision is made for more able pupils. Collaborative approaches are used to very good effect. In questionnaires parents indicated that teaching was good in the school and that work is matched to their children's abilities. Pupils report that their lessons are interesting and that their teachers explain things clearly.

- School assessment practice is satisfactory. Copybooks are very well monitored in the junior room. Suitable screening tests are administered to infant pupils and standardised tests are used from first to sixth classes in English reading and numeracy. Parents are informed of test results in accordance with Department guidelines. An assessment policy is recommended in which consideration might be given to developing assessment for learning strategies on a whole-school basis. A system for tracking pupils' progress is also required to ensure comprehensive profiles of each pupil's learning.

## 6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall provision for pupils with additional and special educational needs is very good. The support teachers have significant expertise and display very good understanding of pupils' priority learning needs. Teaching approaches are very successful and they include in-class, group and individual support. Early intervention strategies are in place for senior-infant pupils.
- While there is very high-quality provision for pupils with special educational needs in the support setting, this would be enhanced if support plans were implemented to link learning in the support setting to learning in the classroom.
- There are very good opportunities provided for pupils to engage in a range of extracurricular activities. The pupils are commended for their successful involvement in both *Discover Primary Science* and *Green-Schools*. External tutors provide tuition in tin whistle and football during school hours; the practice of seeking financial contributions from pupils for this tuition should be discontinued.
- Very effective home-school links are maintained. *Maths for Fun* and paired reading initiatives have been successfully used to develop partnerships with parents. Parents receive regular letters and copies of significant school policies. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually. At the end of each school year written reports are issued to parents summarising pupils' progress and attainments.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

Q1 : The Board of Management and staff of Scoil Bhríde wish to thank the Inspector for the courteous and professional manner in which the Whole School inspection was conducted.

The Board of management, staff, Parents Association and pupils are encouraged by the positive affirmation contained in the Report.

We welcome the recommendations and advice and will work collectively to ensure their implementation.

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

Classroom support plans for pupils with special educational needs have been drawn up and are being implemented with co-operation of the class teachers and learning support team.

The staff are working to develop assessment for learning strategies on a whole school basis with reference to NCCA(2007) Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum Guidelines for school and the S.A.L.F . Programme.