Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bhríde Fantane
Borrisoleigh, Thurles
Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla: 17679L

Date of inspection: 19 January 2011
1. Introduction

Scoil Bhride Fantane is a co-educational primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. There are twenty-two pupils on rolls and the school has two mainstream class teachers.

The last school inspection was undertaken in 2001 and all members of the teaching staff have been appointed since that date. This report presents the findings of a whole-school evaluation undertaken in the school in January 2011. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and History.

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 board of management is very supportive of the work of the school.
- The in-school management team provides good management and leadership to the school.
- The teachers are effective, hardworking and professional. They demonstrate very good concern for the holistic development and welfare of the pupils.
- The quality of teaching ranges from good to very good and a range of teaching approaches is used effectively in each setting.
- In general, pupils’ achievement in English and in Mathematics is very good.
- Pupils’ behaviour is very good and their engagement in learning activities and in school life is highly commendable.
- In general, parents and pupils indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the educational provision in the school.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The board of management is advised to outline priorities for the development of the school. In particular, it should take appropriate steps to secure the provision of appropriate accommodation for the school.
- Additional material resources should be provided for the pupils to support their information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy skills.
- The staff is advised to review the implementation of the English curriculum plan.
- Self-evaluation practices should be further developed.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted, it meets regularly and minutes of meetings are maintained. The board addresses the day-to-day management of the school effectively. The board members are commended for their voluntary work in the school, particularly in the maintenance of school accounts, the upkeep of the grounds and for their contribution to the various projects they have undertaken to enhance the school. School accounts are certified annually. It is recommended that the board analyses the needs of the school and agrees priorities for the future. Consideration, in particular, should be given by the board to the extension and refurbishment of the school building. The board of management is advised to liaise with the Planning and Building Unit in the Department of Education and Skills in this regard.

- The work of the school is supported by an active parents' association that is engaged in the life of the school. It is advised that the board of management communicate more frequently with the school community about its work.

- The principal and deputy principal provide effective leadership to the school community. They work closely as a team and decision making is collaborative. They carry out their respective roles very effectively and they are innovative and willing to undertake new tasks to reflect the needs of the school. They are well-supported by an efficient school secretary.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the whole-school planning process is good. A range of organisational and curricular plans has been devised and the policies required by legislation and by Department of Education and Skills guidelines and circulars have been ratified. These policies are detailed and are based closely on the specific context of the school. The board is advised to discuss policies and plans regularly at its meetings.

- The quality of teacher planning is good. The teachers devise detailed long-term plans and a common template is used to guide short-term planning. In some class levels very good differentiated planning is provided.

- An action plan for whole-school development has been devised. Data generated from standardised tests are monitored by the teachers. In order to further develop the school's ability to self-evaluate, the staff is advised to maintain a strong focus on promoting continuous review of practices in teaching and learning and to engage with school self-evaluation and review.

- 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**

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good to very good in the school. Good attention is given to pupils' individual learning needs. Commendable emphasis is given to promoting talk and discussion and pupils' ideas are used as the starting points for lessons. The pupils are generally confident and almost all pupils enjoy their lessons and their school activities. The teachers demonstrate good, skilful questioning and they practise a range of methodologies which enliven their well-structured lessons. Information and communication technologies are used in a commendable manner to support teaching and it is advised that pupils have more opportunities to develop their skills in using ICT as a learning tool.

- In general, the teaching and learning in Irish is satisfactory in the school and good practice was observed at each class level. Different methodologies are practised and these include language games, songs, poems, pair work and listening tasks. Reading skills are developed appropriately and in some classes pupils read 'real' books. In general, the pupils' written work is of a good standard. It is recommended that further emphasis should be placed on the three stages of communication in each lesson so that pupils' communication skills can be strengthened. It is recommended that personal writing should be undertaken on a more regular basis.

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- In general, the quality of teaching in English is good. Oral language is developed at each class level and good attention is given to the development of oral skills in other areas of the curriculum. A satisfactory range of poetry is explored and in some classes poems are memorised. Appropriate emphasis is placed on reading a range of parallel readers in the infant classes and pupils in all classes are encouraged to read independently. The pupils' achievement in reading ranges from good to very good. It is advised that a greater range of books for literacy activities should be provided. Writing skills are developed systematically throughout the school and the standard of presentation of pupils' work is very commendable. The staff is advised to review the implementation of the English curriculum in order to place additional emphasis on the teaching of specific reading skills, comprehension strategies and writing in a range of genres.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The lessons are well structured and purposeful and an appropriate range of resources and methodologies is used to explore mathematical concepts. As a means of further developing good practice, teachers are advised to engage in more oral problem-solving activities.

- The quality of teaching and learning in History is good. Commendable attention is given to local history and areas of interest in the wider environment are explored. Very interesting and engaging lessons are taught. A range of teaching approaches is used very effectively to engage the pupils and these methodologies include story, role-taking, drama and the use of a range of artefacts and primary historical documents. The interactive whiteboards are used to support the teaching of the lessons. Pupils' understanding of the work undertaken is commendable.
• Questionnaires completed by parents and pupils indicate that there is a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• The quality of the teaching supports for pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties is good. Individual support is provided to two pupils and supports are provided for pupils within the classroom settings in Social, Personal and Health Education, English and Mathematics. The support teachers’ planning is good and targets are identified for individual pupils and groups.

• The quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils is good and the pupils are making good progress.

• The early identification of learning difficulties and the provision of supports for pupils in the infant classes are recommended.