

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Brigid's GNS
Palmerstown, Dublin 20
Uimhir rolla: 18324C

Date of inspection: 16 April 2013



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

1. Introduction

St Brigid's Girls' NS is a vertical primary school located in Palmerstown, Dublin 20. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. There are 357 pupils enrolled in the school, including a number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Enrolment trends are stable and attendance levels are very good for almost all pupils. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream class settings and two support teaching settings. 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:

- Members of the board of management are very committed to the school and they successfully bring their strong personal and professional skills to their roles.
- The school has the support of a very active parents' association and many parents contribute their time to support initiatives relating to curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- The principal, assisted by a very dedicated in-school management team, provides very effective instructional and administrative leadership for the school community.
- The quality of school planning and the school self-evaluation process is very good.
- Pupils express themselves confidently and are empowered by their participation in the Green Schools' Committee and the student council.
- Teachers base their lessons on clear objectives and ensure that suitable resources, strategies and methodologies are used to engage pupils meaningfully in their learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English and Geography is very good.
- The quality of supports for pupils is very good and educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is delivered very effectively through a range of in-class and withdrawal teaching interventions.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Chun barr fheabhais a chur ar labhairt na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge, d'fhéadfaí tógáil ar an bhfoclóir agus teanga a d'fhoghlaim na daltaí cheana go córasach mar bhunús don chomhrá do na téamaí éagsúla.
- *To enhance pupils' Irish speaking further, it is recommended that teachers build progressively upon the vocabulary and language which pupils have already learned as the basis for conversation in the various themes.*
- To further identify and support those pupils who experience difficulty with aspects of mathematics or those whose achievements are very high, it is recommended that more

regular and continuous assessment of pupils' mastery of topics is undertaken to direct specific differentiation approaches.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Members are very committed to the school and they successfully bring their strong personal and professional skills to their roles. The board's priorities are focussed on the pupils' welfare, educational standards and learning experiences. The board discharges its legal and managerial duties very conscientiously. Financial accounts are managed prudently and certified independently.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal provides very effective instructional and administrative leadership for the school community. She articulates a shared vision for the school and she communicates her high expectations to staff and pupils. The principal is ably assisted by a dedicated and skilled in-school management team whose members discharge a wide range of relevant curriculum, organisational and pastoral roles very effectively.
- Resources are managed very effectively. The school building is maintained to a very high standard. Resources are available to support teaching and learning across a variety of curriculum areas. Teachers have created attractive and stimulating learning environments in all classrooms. The caretaker and secretary contribute to the smooth running of the school.
- The management of relationships and communications between the school, parents and the wider community is very good. The school has the support of a very active parents' association and many parents contribute their time to support initiatives relating to curricular and extra-curricular activities. The school library is operated by a group of parents. In response to the inspectorate questionnaire, almost all parents expressed satisfaction with the school, its atmosphere and its welcome for parents.
- The management of pupils is of a very high standard. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very respectful and pupils present themselves confidently and articulately. Discipline is very positive in the school. Pupils are empowered by their participation in the Green Schools' Committee and the student council. In response to the Inspectorate questionnaire, most pupils reported that they like school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and the school self-evaluation process is very good. A cyclical and collaborative system of policy formulation and review is in place. Administrative plans reflect the specific needs of the school and provide clear guidance on a wide range of school activities. Curriculum planning is of a very high standard and teachers are commended for using the curriculum plans as a guide for a curriculum implementation.
- The school has eagerly embraced the principles of the school self-evaluation process. Action plans have been devised and implemented for school improvement in literacy and numeracy. In further developing its approach to school self-evaluation it is advised that greater focus be placed upon the creation of specific and measurable targets for improving pupil outcomes through exploration of suitable sub-themes in teaching and learning.

- The quality of classroom planning is good, with many teachers providing specific plans for language development across subject areas. Curriculum objectives are regularly used as the basis of classroom planning. In some cases greater attention needs to be given to planning for the differentiation of learning outcomes for pupils with special education needs or pupils with high attainment.
- 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

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement, in the settings observed, is very good. Teachers ensure that suitable resources, strategies and methodologies are used to engage pupils meaningfully in their learning. Classrooms are managed effectively and all teachers demonstrate proficient teaching skills, particularly in relation to provision of collaborative learning experiences. The quality of pupils' oral and written work is generally very good. Most pupils report that their teachers explain things clearly and that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith an teanga agus aithrisíonn na daltaí raon breá filíochta agus amhrán go muiníneach ag gach leibhéal. Úsáidtear réimse maith straitéisí chun labhairt na daltaí a mhealladh agus bíonn daltaí ag cumarsáid go fonnmhar le linn na gceachtanna. Chun barr fheabhais a chur ar labhairt na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge, moltar do mhuinteóirí tógáil ar an bhfoclóir a d'fhoghlaim daltaí cheana go córasach mar bhunús don chomhrá. Cé go bhfuil caighdeán maith léitheoireachta sroichte ag tromlach na ndaltaí, b'fhiú fíor-leabhair, úrscéalta agus téacsanna céimniúil a úsáid níos leithne. Scríobhann na daltaí go maith sna seánraí éagsúla.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A positive attitude is cultivated towards Irish and pupils recite a fine range of poetry and songs confidently at every level. A good range of strategies is used to encourage pupils' speaking and pupils communicate willingly during the lessons. To further enhance pupils' Irish speaking, it is recommended that teachers build progressively upon the vocabulary which pupils have already learned as the basis of conversation. While most pupils reach a good standard in reading, it would be worthwhile to use real books, novels and graded reading material more broadly. Pupils write well in various genres.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Oral language lessons are planned and taught very effectively and most pupils express themselves confidently and articulately. Standards in reading are very good and reading skills are developed purposefully through systematic attention to phonological awareness and a praiseworthy focus on comprehension strategies. Lessons in writing emphasise the creative elements of planning and drafting and pupils write well in a wide range of genres. Pupils present their written work very attractively. Rhymes and poetry are explored meaningfully at all levels.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Teachers present their lessons through a variety of suitable approaches. Features of best practice included exploration of concrete materials, explicit teaching of mathematical terminology, regular oral mathematics lessons and a whole-school approach to problem

solving. Most pupils demonstrate good understanding of number concepts and most can undertake a range of age-appropriate calculations competently. To further identify and support those pupils who experience difficulty with aspects of Mathematics or those whose achievements are very high, it is recommended that more regular and continuous assessment of pupils' mastery of topics is undertaken to direct specific differentiation approaches.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is very good. The school has achieved five Green Flags and a high level of environmental awareness pervades throughout. Teachers use a wide range of resources, including maps, photographs and weather recording equipment during Geography lessons to develop pupils' skills as geographers. Topics are often integrated very effectively with other curriculum areas and with aspects of History and Science. Pupils at all levels demonstrate high age-appropriate levels of knowledge about specific language, local and distant environments, national geography and mapping skills.
- The quality of assessment is very good. Teachers employ a wide range of screening, diagnostic and standardised tests to establish pupils' learning needs. Mainstream class teachers maintain a wide range of summative assessment records on pupils' attainment across the curriculum. Some very good examples of *Assessment for Learning* (AFL) approaches were noted during the evaluation. The impact of assessment was optimised in a limited number of settings where it was linked to specific differentiation for identified learning needs.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is very good. Educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is delivered very effectively through a range of in-class and withdrawal teaching interventions. Learning needs are diagnosed methodically and the school implements a system of early intervention and the Department's *Continuum of Support* very effectively. A part-time teacher, funded by the local *School Completion Programme*, provides valuable support for Mathematics.
- Educational plans for pupils receiving support teaching are devised collaboratively and include specific learning targets and intended teaching strategies. The quality of support teaching is very good and these pupils are making commendable progress in literacy, numeracy, social skills' development and acquisition of English as an additional language. The special needs assistants discharge their duties in a caring manner.

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 and accepts in full the contents of the WSE report and is affirmed by the experience.

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