Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bhríde Boys National School
Kilcruttin, Tullamore, County Offaly
Uimhir rolla: 18524K

Date of inspection: 14 October 2010
1. Introduction

Scoil Bhríde Boys NS is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school provides education for boys from second to sixth class. It has an administrative principal, seven mainstream class teachers, two learning-support/resource teachers, one teacher for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and a resource teacher for children of the Traveller community. The school also has a special class for pupils with mild general learning disability. There are 177 pupils enrolled. English is an additional language for almost half of these pupils. The school is in receipt of various supports under Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), a Department programme that aims to alleviate educational disadvantage. The school shares the services of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator. The board of management of the school 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:

- This is a well-run school with very good leadership and effective management structures.
- The school building, grounds and amenities are maintained to a very high standard.
- The school provides an orderly, welcoming, stimulating learning environment. A positive, respectful ethos is evident in the daily operation of the school.
- There is evidence of very good engagement with whole-school planning by the teaching staff.
- As a consequence, there is very good continuity and progression in the pupils’ learning from year to year.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that teachers differentiate their class programmes, lessons and activities more effectively in order to cater for the diverse range of learning and language needs in their classes.
- It is recommended that there be a more systematic approach to oral-language development in English and further development of cross-curricular strategies in this area.
- It is recommended that the school use data collated on pupil achievement to establish baselines and to set specific, measurable targets in its DEIS plan.

3. Quality of School Management

- The Board is properly constituted and operates in accordance with relevant legislation and the Department’s rules of procedure.
- The quality of in-school management is very good. The principal demonstrates vision, dedication and good organisational ability. The principal, deputy principal, assistant
principal and special-duties teachers form a very good in-school management team. There is effective delegation of appropriate responsibilities and there are good procedures for agreeing and reviewing the duties allocated to each post.

- There is evidence of effective communication with parents about the progress of their children and about the work of the school generally. It is recommended that relevant information regarding each pupil’s performance in standardised attainment tests be communicated to parents in an annual written report, in accordance with Department circular 138/2006. The activities organised by the HSCL co-ordinator contribute significantly to the work of the school. It is recommended that further attempts be made to establish a parents’ association in the school.

- The management of pupils is very good.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The in-school management team provides very good leadership for the whole-school planning process. The organisational and curricular plans that have been produced are specific to the particular context of this school and it is evident that they are being implemented. It is recommended that there be greater parental involvement in the development and review of school policies. It is recommended that all policies be signed by the chairperson of the board of management once they have been ratified by the board.

- The quality of individual teacher planning is good overall.

- The school has made good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to collate data on pupil achievement in standardised attainment tests. It is recommended that the school use this data to establish baselines and to set specific, measurable whole-school targets in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Relevant resources in this regard are available at www.ppds.ie under the heading DEIS.

Child protection policy and procedures

- 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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers foster a positive classroom climate and very good working relationships with their pupils. There is good use of resources (including ICT). The teachers demonstrate high levels of confidence and competence in planning and managing classroom activities. There were good opportunities for purposeful pupil-pupil interaction in many of the lessons observed. It is recommended that there be greater differentiation of class programmes and lessons to reflect the wide range of language and learning needs in each class.
There is evidence of breadth and balance in English reading programmes. Teachers make good use of children's literature and other authentic reading materials. There is a well-organised school library. First Steps writing strategies are well established in the school and the writing lessons observed were well structured. It is recommended that there be a greater emphasis on enabling pupils to develop a fluent, joined handwriting style. It is recommended also that a dedicated oral-language period be included on the weekly timetable for every class.

The communicative approach is implemented effectively in the teaching of Irish. The language is often spoken informally outside of Irish lessons. Overall, there is commendable continuity in the Irish programme as pupils progress from one class to another. This could be further developed through implementing a whole-school approach to the use of verbs in conversation. Regular, structured work is completed in reading and writing. A very good range of printed material is displayed in all classrooms. There is scope to provide pupils with experience of writing in a broader range of genres, as happens in English.

Mathematics lessons are clear, well structured and focused on appropriate curriculum objectives. There is good use of mathematical equipment and illustrative materials to support pupils’ learning of key skills and concepts. The staff is to be commended for devising and implementing a whole-school approach to elements such as number facts, mental arithmetic, maths games and problem-solving. Pupils would benefit from a whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematical language. Effective co-operation was observed between class teachers and support teachers in the use of station-teaching. This good practice could be further developed throughout the school.

The school makes good provision for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The school plan in this area is broad and balanced. There was effective use of appropriate activities and resources in the SPHE lessons observed. It is recommended that the school plan for relationships and sexuality education (RSE) be revised, with a view to providing more guidance for teachers and information for parents on the content to be taught in each class.

### 6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Supplementary teaching is provided for pupils with learning difficulties or learning disabilities in their own classroom or in the support-teacher’s room, as appropriate. The quality of this work is very good.

- There was good differentiation of activities in the special class for pupils with mild general learning disability. It is recommended that the whole-school policy for this class be revised, with a view to providing more guidance on the implementation of the *Primary School Curriculum and Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (NCCA). It is recommended that the school ensure that pupils in the special class make the transition to an age-appropriate educational setting when they go beyond primary-school age.
• The school provides very good support overall for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). The Polish and Lithuanian languages are used regularly in communication with parents. The quality of the supplementary teaching provided for pupils with EAL is very good. It is recommended that the school’s EAL policy be revised, so that it provides clear guidance regarding the teaching strategies to be used in mainstream classrooms to support the learning of pupils with EAL.

• There is evidence that the school provides good support for children of the Traveller community.
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, staff, parents’ and pupils of Scoil Bhríde wish to thank the Department of Education and Skills’ Inspectorate for the courteous and professional manner in which it carried out the Whole School Evaluation process.

We acknowledge the affirmation of the high quality of teaching and learning in this school and will include the helpful recommendations of the Inspectorate in future whole school planning.