Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bhríde
Convoy, County Donegal

Uimhir rolla: 18737E

Date of inspection: 23 February 2012
1. Introduction

Scoil Bhríde is a mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Raphoe. The attendance patterns of the majority of the 197 pupils enrolled are satisfactory. The attendance of a minority has scope for improvement. At the time of this evaluation two teachers were on leave and two newly qualified, substitute teachers were employed by the board. The school participates in the School Completion Programme. Provision for English, Irish, Mathematics and Physical Education 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:

- Scoil Bhríde provides a very welcoming, nurturing and secure environment for its pupils.
- The work of the board of management is very effective.
- The principal provides highly commendable leadership to the school community.
- Teachers are innovative in their approach to teaching and some instances of excellent teaching were observed.
- The Irish language is promoted and used very effectively in all aspects of school life.
- The students’ council provides very good opportunity for pupils to express their views on school matters.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support.

The following main recommendations are made:

- School attendance should continue to be promoted and rewarded.
- Further differentiation of literacy activities is recommended in order to support the range in abilities in each classroom.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is very effective. Members display an enthusiasm for continuous improvement. The board is commended for its support of teachers’ professional development. Current priorities include improvements in literacy and school attendance. It is recommended that training be sought for new board members and that school accounts be audited periodically.

- The principal works in a highly committed manner and provides very purposeful leadership to the school community. He has excellent rapport with staff and has created a very welcoming, nurturing and secure environment for pupils. Administrative duties are carried out to a very high standard. The rest of the in-school management team works
very diligently and contributes to the successful management of the school. In particular, the work of the deputy principal in co-ordinating information and communications technologies (ICT) is very effective. It is recommended that literacy and numeracy co-ordination be prioritised when reviewing the duties of post-holders.

- The management of resources is very good. All learning environments are highly commendable in terms of print and number-rich displays and are very well resourced. Corridor displays celebrate the pupils’ written, creative and environmental work. However, while school accommodation is satisfactory overall, the smaller classrooms restrict active learning experiences to a certain degree. The school benefits very significantly from the efficient, diligent efforts of its secretary, cleaner and caretaker.

- The management of relationships with the school community is very good. The parents’ association works industriously to raise additional funding for school needs. Their purchase of laptop computers and supplementary reading materials is highly praiseworthy. Parents participate in a range of school activities. Responses to parental questionnaires, administered as part of the evaluation, indicate that the school is welcoming of parents and that most parents are happy with the school.

- The management of pupils is very effective. While the pupils are very pleasant and well behaved, listening skills should be promoted further in a few classrooms. The students’ council is a very welcome development which will help to ensure that the pupils’ priorities are addressed. Pupils’ responses to the questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that they feel safe in class, get on well with other children and enjoy supportive relationships with their teachers.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school administrative and curriculum planning is good. A web site would be useful to facilitate the dissemination of key policies with the school community. The use of planning grids to outline whole-school approaches to problem solving, estimation and other important aspects of the Mathematics programme is recommended to ensure greater consistency of practice across the school.

- Teachers have initiated effective self-evaluation practices. They track and monitor literacy and numeracy development meticulously. As a next step, an improvement plan with specific targets and timeframes to raise the reading standards of pupils should be devised.

- Classroom planning is commendable. Teachers provide very effective long-term planning with clear, time-bound targets. It is recommended that further consideration be given to planning for the differentiation of literacy activities in order to support the range in pupils’ abilities in each classroom. Collaborative planning for team-teaching is very good.

- 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

- Tá caighdeán an-mhaith le sonrú i múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge. Tá úsáid leitheadúl na teanga le moladh go háirithe i dteagasc an Chorpoideachais. Déantar na
The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good. The prevalent use of the language is commended particularly in the teaching of Physical Education. Language skills are developed through the creative, stimulating use of contemporary themes. The majority of pupils can read to a satisfactory standard, however, it is recommended that pre-reading activities should be increased to consolidate word recognition and the pronunciation of new words in the text. The standard of writing achieved by the majority of pupils is commendable.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Oral language development is emphasised regularly and the pupils enjoy vocabulary enrichment exercises. This work should continue to be prioritised. The use of parallel readers and paired reading initiatives throughout the school is praiseworthy. Attainment in standardised tests, however, indicates some scope for improvement. Teachers are aware of this and show considerable dedication to improving reading standards. Many opportunities are provided for the pupils to write in a range of genres. The quality of writing in projects completed across the curriculum is laudable.

Provision for Mathematics is commendable. Effective practice observed during the evaluation included regular mental mathematics sessions, emphasis on the social importance of mathematics and good use of concrete materials and ICT. Pupils engage enthusiastically in learning activities. Written work presents very neatly in almost all instances. Attainment in standardised tests is good overall with some very high scores in evidence. Some teachers analyse the outcomes of mathematics assessments in a manner that informs teaching. This excellent practice should be extended across the school.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Physical Education is very good. Lessons observed were organised very well and appropriate attention was paid to skill development. The pupils engaged well and were active and co-operative. The standard of outdoor hard-surface play areas is excellent.

The overall quality of teaching across the curriculum is very good. Teachers are innovative in their approach and there were some instances of excellent teaching noted during the evaluation. Overall, the quality of learning and pupil achievement is good. Pupils’ questionnaire responses indicate that that they have regular opportunities to use computers and that their teachers tell them how to improve their work. However, further opportunities for group work and additional input from pupils into the assessment of and for their learning would be beneficial. Parents’ responses indicate that they feel that teaching is good, that their children are doing well and that there are good arrangements for parent/teacher meetings.

The quality of assessment is good. Suitable screening and standardised tests are used in literacy and numeracy. It is recommended, however, that standardised testing in Irish be undertaken. Assessment of learning in many classrooms is very comprehensive. It would be beneficial to link assessment more clearly in some classrooms to specific learning objectives. The effective assessment for learning strategies observed in some classrooms should be used on a whole-school basis.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school promotes inclusion and is welcoming of pupils with special educational needs. Four teachers provide specific support in this area; two are based in the school and two visit from other schools. Whole-school supports for pupils on the continuum of support are very good. Two special needs assistants support pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms very effectively.

- Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good. A very comprehensive range of diagnostic tests is used to identify pupils’ learning strengths and needs. Comprehensive individual educational plans (IEPs) are formulated in consultation with class teachers, pupils and parents. Support sessions are conducted in a very affirming, structured manner and learning outcomes are very good. Learning-support provision is very effective and is provided through a combination of withdrawal and in-class interventions. The quality of learning is very good and records are maintained very well. It is advised that a wider range of interventions be implemented including short support programmes, additional in-class support and team-teaching as part of the early intervention programme.

- Very effective home-school links are maintained. Induction and transfer meetings are organised appropriately. Parents receive letters regularly and parent-teacher meetings are held annually. The sixth-class pupils produce an informative magazine for the wider community. At the end of each school year, informative written reports are issued to parents summarising pupils’ progress and attainments.

- The school receives very good support from the School Completion Programme. Activities organised include in-school, after-school and holiday support activities. External tutors are invited into the school to support various areas of the curriculum. Resources are used effectively in support of children at risk of early school leaving. In the future, initiatives should be aligned more closely to the development of literacy in the school.

- The school facilitates a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities including the Discover Primary Science programme, the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition, the MS Readathon, Réalt Uladh, the Green-Schools programme, local historical competitions and charity events. There are very good cross-community links with a nearby school.

Published June 2012
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

Cuireann Bord Bainistiochta Scoil Bhríde fáilte roimh na fionnachta ón Mheastóireacht Scoile Uile. Gabhann an Bord buíochas leis an bheirt cigire as an dóigh a chuir said an Meastóireacht i gcrióch.

The Board of Management of Scoil Bhríde welcomes the findings of the evaluation of our school. The Board is pleased that the Inspectorate has identified the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement as very good in our school.

The Board looks forward to an active engagement with the Building section of the Department of Education and Skills to address the issues re cramped accommodation for our pupils and teachers.

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

The Board of Management wish to thank the Inspectors for their helpful recommendations and we as a Board in conjunction with Parents and Staff have implemented and will continue to implement the recommendations for the good of the school.