

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Holy Spirit BNS
Silloge Road
Ballymun, Dublin 11
Uimhir rolla: 19208F

Date of inspection: 19 September 2013



1. Introduction

Holy Spirit BNS operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school is included in Band 1 of the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. A range of initiatives is provided under the DEIS plan to support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy, to promote partnership with parents and with other schools and agencies, and to improve pupil attendance and retention. School attendance levels have been improving steadily over a number of years and are now very good among the 336 pupils enrolled. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and six 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 and of the in-school management team maintain a clear focus on the development of the school, and they work purposefully and collaboratively to achieve this common goal.
- The management of pupils is very good throughout the school. Pupils behave very respectfully towards each other and their teachers, and they are commended for their very good behaviour.
- Assessment practices are very well developed in the school. A wide range of assessment instruments is used effectively and results are recorded appropriately and subjected to thorough analysis in order to identify areas for further development.
- Strong self-evaluation practices are in evidence in the school. Initiatives to support teaching and learning are chosen carefully and the effectiveness of these initiatives is examined critically by staff.
- The range of supports provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The team-teaching approaches to the teaching and learning of English and Mathematics are particularly effective throughout the school.
- The development of phonological awareness in infant and junior classes is very effective.
- The development of pupils' writing is undertaken very systematically throughout the school.
- The school's implementation of initiatives to support parental involvement is having a positive impact on pupil learning throughout the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Tá scóip chun forbartha i soláthar na scoile don Ghaeilge. Moltar ach go háirithe béim sa bhreis a leagan ar chur chuigí cumarsáideacha a úsáid. B'fhiú smaoinemh a dhéanamh

ar an dul chun cinn a mbítear ag súil leis ó rang go rang. *There is scope for development in the school's provision for Irish. In particular, it is advised that additional emphasis is placed on the use of communicative approaches. Thought should be given to identifying the expected progression from class to class.*

- There is scope for more detail on specific learning objectives and learning activities in teachers' short-term planning.
- Possibilities exist for exploring how desired learning outcomes for oral language could be achieved through integration with other curriculum areas.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and works collaboratively and effectively. It meets regularly and plays an active role in the development of school policy. Detailed minutes are kept of meetings and these minutes indicate that the board is fully aware of all aspects of the life of the school. Board members display a strong commitment to the welfare of pupils and staff.
- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The leadership provided by all members, both individually and collectively, is exemplary. They work together closely to provide prudent leadership across curriculum, organisational and pastoral domains. Communication among in-school management and staff is open and respectful, and leads to very good staff relations in the school. The commitment of management to supporting continuing professional development is highly commended. It facilitates the development of expertise among teachers and results in the introduction of initiatives which support the further development of the school.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. Display areas in corridors and classrooms are utilised effectively to create a stimulating learning environment for pupils. The development of the school garden enhances the school environment and is a source of pride for both staff and pupils. A plentiful supply of resources is provided to support teaching and learning. Funding has been used very well to develop school and classroom libraries. Parents' questionnaire responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the facilities provided in the school.
- The management of pupils is very good throughout the school. A very positive and productive learning environment has been created for pupils. Strategies to promote positive behaviour among pupils are implemented successfully and have contributed to significant improvements in attendance levels. Pupils behave very respectfully towards each other and their teachers, and they are commended for their very good behaviour. Instances of challenging behaviour are kept to a minimum through perceptive observation by teachers and by the use of specific programmes to promote good discipline throughout the school. Pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that they feel secure in school and that they are progressing well with their work.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is highly commended. The school's experience of DEIS planning processes has been very

positive and has resulted in measurable and sustained improvements in each of the targeted areas. Assessment practices are very well developed in the school. A wide range of assessment instruments is utilised effectively. Assessment results are recorded appropriately and subjected to thorough analysis in order to identify areas for further development. Priority areas for the further development of the school have been identified and specific actions have been agreed in order to address these priorities.

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good. A collaborative and reflective approach guides the development of school policy in a purposeful manner. The school plan provides useful guidance for teachers regarding the structure of the proposed programme for all curriculum areas and for each class level. Classroom planning is of good quality. While all teachers provide short-term planning, there is scope to include more detail of specific learning objectives and learning activities.
- 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 clár córasach eagraithe ag an scoil do mhúineadh na Gaeilge thar na ceithre snáitheanna agus cuireann an fhoireann an clár seo i bhfeidhm go coinsiasach. Úsáideann siad raon leathan áiseanna chun ceachtanna a chur i láthair agus chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt sna gníomhaíochtaí foghlama. Baintear feidhm rialta as chluichí teanga le linn ceachtanna Gaeilge agus is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh as na gníomhaíochtaí éagsúla. Tá scóip chun forbartha sa tsoláthar, áfach. Moltar ach go háirithe béim sa bhreis a leagan ar chur chuigí cumarsáideacha a úsáid. Faoi láthair tá an iomarca béime ar leathnú foclóra, agus níl dóthain deiseanna ag na daltaí an teanga nua a chleachtadh i suímh réalaiócha. Ba chóir go gcuirfí béim ar abairtí a chumadh agus a úsáid, in ionad freagraí aonfhoclacha a mhealladh ó na daltaí. Chuige sin, tá gá le háiseanna a chur ar fáil do dhaltaí a chabhródh leo chun fíorchumarsáid a dhéanamh i nGaeilge. B'fhiú don fhoireann smaoinreamh a dhéanamh ar an dul chun cinn a mbítear ag súil leis ó rang go rang. B'fhiú freisin dánta agus amhráin i nGaeilge a mhúineadh go rialta tríd an scoil chun cur le stór teanga na ndaltaí.
- *A systematic programme has been organised by the school for the teaching of Irish across the four curriculum strands and the staff implements this programme conscientiously. They use a wide range of resources to present lessons and to stimulate pupils' interest in learning activities. Regular use is made of language games during Irish lessons and it is evident that enjoy the various activities. There is scope for development in the provision, however. It is recommended in particular that greater emphasis is placed on the use of communicative approaches. At present there is too much emphasis on vocabulary extension, and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise new language in realistic settings. Emphasis should be placed on the composition and use of sentences rather than eliciting single-word responses from pupils. To this end, there is a need to provide resources for pupils which would help them to communicate in Irish. It would be worthwhile for the staff to consider what progress should be expected from class to class. It would also be appropriate to teach poems and songs regularly throughout the school in order to build on pupils' store of language.*
- The quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement in English is generally good with some aspects at a particularly high standard at particular class levels. Explicit attention is paid to the teaching of oral English and care is taken to select appropriate programmes and lessons. The specific identification of a desired learning outcome for oral language development in lessons across the curriculum would increase the range of

authentic learning opportunities for meaningful vocabulary and syntax development. The teaching of reading skills is particularly effective in the infant, junior and support settings, both in withdrawal and in-class. There is scope to enhance senior pupils' reading skills through making these more explicit to pupils, through showing them how these skills develop from class to class and through providing pupils with more on-going feedback as they progress in acquiring these skills. The development of pupils' writing skills is undertaken very systematically and to very good effect, particularly in the infant and junior classes. Making pupils in the senior classes aware of how their writing skills in the different genres should develop from class to class will help to ensure an appropriate level of challenge during lessons in writing.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable. Pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts is developed systematically through the use of a co-ordinated programme. Teachers utilise a wide range of resources effectively during well-structured lessons. Very good use is made of concrete materials to provide hands-on learning activities for pupils. The use of team teaching approaches is particularly effective as it ensures high levels of focused participation by pupils in learning activities which are selected carefully and well managed. Teachers carefully review the effectiveness and impact of programmes used for the teaching of Mathematics. This practice is highly commended.
- The quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. The science curriculum is implemented in a broad and balanced manner and is very well resourced. Provision is enriched by the school's initiatives such as the school garden and the opportunity for pupils to engage in a robotics programme. The teaching of Science places an appropriate emphasis on working scientifically, encouraging curiosity and relating lessons to pupils' lives. Making explicit for pupils the connections between new and previous learning would enrich pupils' conceptual understanding of the topics that are explored, particularly in terms of topics that are revisited at different class levels. Pupils display good understanding of the areas covered in the science programme and they speak confidently and knowledgeably about the experiments they have conducted and about models they design and make.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good overall with many aspects of a very good standard. There is scope for development in a small number of areas. In some classroom teaching is of a very high standard with purposeful, stimulating and appropriately challenging lessons characterised by the very effective use of active learning methodologies and the use of good quality teaching resources. In a number of other instances, however, there is scope to engage and challenge pupils to a greater extent. Attainment levels in the infant and junior classrooms are very good generally. Attainment levels in the middle and senior classes are very good for particular aspects of English and Mathematics, such as writing and computation. There is scope for improvement in pupils' attainment levels in Irish. Pupils learn to work scientifically as they experience a broad and balanced programme in Science which encompasses all curriculum strands.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with particular learning needs is very good. Care is taken to accurately and comprehensively identify these pupils' needs and to formulate appropriate plans for addressing these needs. The implementation of these plans is very effective due to the focused and systematic teaching of the learning support teachers. Support is provided in a variety of contexts including mainstream classes and through withdrawal. Collaborative approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy have a positive and measurable impact on pupils' attainment levels in these areas. The

approach to monitoring and assessing pupils' progress is worthy of particular praise. The work of the Home, School and Community Liaison Scheme is very effective, with activities being appropriately focused in terms of both their intention and impact within the school community.

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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 and staff of the Holy Spirit BNS Ballymun are pleased that the report acknowledges the commitment and dedication of all members of our school community, as all elements work together, for the good of the pupils.

The report is an affirmation of the good work and high standards in our school. We were pleased that the behaviour and engagement of our pupils in their learning was acknowledged and we take pride in the high standard of teaching and learning. It is important to us that an inclusive and high quality of support for pupils with special educational needs was also reported.

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 has already started the process of reviewing the schools approach to oral language, in particular with regard to other curricular areas.

