

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St Brigid's Boys' NS
Howth Road, Killester, Dublin 5.
Uimhir rolla: 19308J**

Date of inspection: 20 January 2011



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

1. Introduction

St Brigid's Boys' National School caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It is located in Killester, Dublin 5 and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Current enrolment is 403 pupils and attendance levels are very good. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and five 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:

- The school is managed by a committed and purposeful board of management.
- Dynamic and strategic leadership is provided by the school principal and in-school management team.
- The quality of whole-school planning is very good.
- An affirming and nurturing school culture exists where pupils are challenged and encouraged to do their best.
- Lessons are delivered in a lively, structured and stimulating manner, making creative and effective use of a range of resources.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons, applying themselves to their work with vigour and pride.
- Support for pupils is delivered in a structured, affirming and deliberate manner.
- Pupils are offered a broad range of extra-curricular activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The practice of providing learning support within an in-class setting should be extended, and additional provision should be made for more able pupils.
- While pair work and collaborative learning are used to good effect in some classes, there is potential for the wider use of such approaches.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed by an effective board of management which meets regularly and keeps suitable records of meetings. The board primarily concerns itself with the provision of resources to support teaching and learning, the maintenance of the school building, the support of staff-development initiatives, and the development of school policies. The

board stated that it is satisfied with the way in which the curriculum is taught and with the achievement of the pupils.

- The school is presented in a very neat and stimulating manner. It has acquired an extensive selection of resources. In particular, teacher designed-resources, the school library and the portfolio of resources for English are of noteworthy mention. Members of the school staff regularly engage in professional development courses.
- The management of pupils is of a high standard. Pupils conduct themselves in an exemplary manner, interacting in a polite, courteous and pleasant way with both teachers and peers. Teachers are commended for the positive, attentive and warm manner in which they interact with pupils.
- The in-school management team operates in a strategic and collaborative manner, meeting regularly and applying itself to tasks and duties with focus and rigour. The team is led by a committed and enthusiastic principal who actively seeks to cultivate a learning environment which is both nurturing and stimulating, where pupils are encouraged and inspired to do their best.
- The school regularly communicates with parents and the wider school community. Parent-teacher meetings are held each year with a written report being issued on the progress of each child in the summer term. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school and they participate in a wide range of school activities and events.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is very good. Teacher subgroups are established to guide the formulation of policies, with parental opinions and insights being regularly sought.
- All teachers write long and short-term plans to guide the delivery of the curriculum. These are clear and focused with suitable provision for the sequential development of lesson content. A number of teachers make reference to differentiation practices. Monthly reports are completed and clearly delineate the lesson content covered.
- The school is keenly aware of the importance of self-review, and accordingly surveys of teachers' opinions on the effectiveness of various school policies are undertaken regularly. Other commendable self-review processes include discussions at staff meetings to examine the school's success in delivering various aspects of the curriculum.
- 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

- Cuirtear béim inmholta ar an gcultúr Gaelach. Sonraítear atmaisféar fábhach don Ghaeilge sa scoil. Moltar mar a bhaintear úsáid as an nGaeilge mar theanga chaidrimh i

rith an lae i gcuid mhór de na ranganna. Rachadh sé chun tairbhe do dhul chun cinn na Gaeilge sa scoil ach an cleachtas seo a leathnú tríd an scoil de réir mar is cuí. Léiríonn na daltaí cumas labhartha, agus tá siad in ann labhairt go leanúnach faoi ábhair oiriúnacha. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as modhanna éagsúla teagaisc chun ceachtanna bríomhara agus spreagúla a sholáthar agus cuireann siad béim ar théamaí a bhaineann le timpeallacht agus le taithí na ndaltaí. I gcásanna áirithe, baineann cuid de na hoidí úsáid as modh an aistriúcháin chun abairtí agus foclóir nua a mhiniú do na daltaí. Moltar an cleachtas seo a sheachaint.

Forbraítear na scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta go héifeachtúil agus léiríonn na daltaí dul chun cinn creidiúnach sna gnóthaí seo. Léann na daltaí go cruinn agus le tuiscint. Cleachtann siad tascanna éagsúla scríbhneoireachta agus scríobhann siad go minic i seánraí éagsúla. Chun tacú leis an obair seo, b'fhiú deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí a bheith ag obair go comhoibríteach i ngrúpaí agus iad ag cleachtadh a gcuid cumadóireachta.

Commendable emphasis is placed on Irish culture. A positive atmosphere towards Irish can be found in the school. The manner in which Irish is used as a language of communication during the day in many of the classrooms is commended. It would further enhance the progress of Irish in the school if this practice could be further extended throughout the school as appropriate. Pupils show ability in speaking, and they are able to speak coherently about appropriate topics. Teachers make effective use of a variety of teaching methods to develop lively and stimulating lessons they emphasise themes which relate to the environment and experience of the pupils. In certain instances, some teachers make use of the translation method to explain new vocabulary and sentences to the pupils. It is advised that such practice should be avoided.

Reading and writing skills are developed effectively and pupils demonstrate credible progress in these activities. Pupils read with accuracy and understanding. They engage in various writing activities and frequently write in a variety of genres. To support this work, it would be worthwhile to provide the pupils with opportunities to work co-operatively in groups as they engage in composition.

- A structured and comprehensive programme is in place for English. There is very good provision for the development of the pupils' oral language. Pupils analyse, debate and discuss various themes and topics with enthusiasm and competence. A number of teachers make effective use of pair work and collaborative learning in the development of language skills. There is some potential for the wider use of such approaches.
- The school adopts a focused, systematic approach to the development of the pupils' reading skills. Parental involvement in pupils' reading is successfully encouraged. Pupils reveal a keen interest in reading and are making very good progress. Suitable provision is in place for the development of the pupils' comprehension and books are displayed attractively in classrooms. Pupils' writing skills are systematically developed in all classes. Teachers give pupils opportunities to write in a range of genres and for a range of audiences. The school emphasises the appreciation and celebration of poetry. Pupils are encouraged to compose their own poems and they do so with enthusiasm, creativity and competence.
- Mathematics lessons are delivered in a focused and engaging manner. Lesson objectives are explained clearly with good provision for pupils' questions. Content is suitably linked to the experience and environment of the pupils. In a number of instances, teachers creatively integrate lesson content with other areas of the curriculum. Teachers make very good use of resources, including ICT, to present lesson content and of co-operative learning and plenary sessions. Suitable provision is in place for the development of estimation, reasoning skills and problem-solving, with some teachers encouraging pupils

to create and design problems of their own. There is some potential for the wider use of such practices in the school. While classrooms are very well presented as maths-rich environments, it is recommended that the school corridors and the general school be further developed as a maths-rich environment.

- Drama lessons serve to stimulate and involve pupils effectively. Lessons are delivered in a structured and creative manner in both discrete and integrated contexts. Various teaching methods are used creatively and effectively. Resources are used to good effect, with story, poetry, music and visual stimuli serving as springboards for the exploration of feelings and ideas within real and fictional worlds.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in this school is very good. Lessons have very good pace and direction. Pupils show interest in their work, participating enthusiastically in lessons and applying themselves to learning tasks with focus and care. Data from pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that there is scope for the wider use of co-operative learning activities. Teachers are keenly conscious of the importance of standards and maintain a consistent and careful watch on pupils' progress. As part of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, pupils in fifth and sixth classes benefit from a structured and stimulating programme in French.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Well co-ordinated support is provided for pupils with additional learning needs. Pupils' work is monitored carefully by mainstream teachers and by members of the special education team. Comprehensive individual profiles and learning programmes (IPLPs) are compiled for pupils following a thorough information gathering process which involves mainstream teachers, learning support and resource teachers, external agencies and parents.
- Withdrawal and in-class approaches are used effectively to provide support. Learning activities are targeted at pupils' identified learning needs and are varied, interesting and well managed. An extensive range of resources is used very well to facilitate pupils' full engagement in learning activities. In line with findings from the school's own self-review processes, it is recommended that the school build on current good practice in terms of providing in-class support for pupils and making greater provision for more able pupils.

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 of St. Brigid's Boys' N.S. would like to thank the Department of Educations' team of inspectors for the professional and courteous manner in which they carried out the Whole School Evaluation. We found the process to be a very positive experience and the main strengths of the school as outlined in your report are particularly encouraging.

We are delighted that the report affirms the dedication and commitment of the Board of Management, the Principal, our in-school management team, teachers, ancillary staff and parents. We welcome the fact that the school is functioning very effectively and that the report commends the quality of teaching and learning alongside the affirming and nurturing school culture.

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 and staff of the school are committed to implementing the recommendations as outlined in the report and believe this work will enhance the operation and performance of the school.

As a staff we constantly engage in a process of self-evaluation and it is affirming that recommendations made were already identified by staff as priorities.

- We have extended the level of in-class support for SEN pupils and we are currently investigating best practice in this regard in other schools.
- Additional strategies which allow us to challenge the more able pupils are being explored.
- Further opportunities for collaborative learning have been introduced as part of our review of the school's maths plan and this will be further developed.