Whole School Evaluation REPORT

Butlersbridge National School
Butlersbridge, Co. Cavan
Uimhir rolla: 19326L

Date of inspection: 18 January 2012
1. Introduction

Butlersbridge National School, Butlersbridge, Co. Cavan is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. Pupil attendance levels are very good. The number of pupils enrolled has grown steeply in the last two years and at the time of the evaluation the enrolment was 163 pupils. As a consequence additional staffing was allocated in the current school year under the Developing Schools Criteria of Primary Circular 19/2011. 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 board of management is very supportive of the work of the school. Its members give generously of their time in supporting the operation of the school.
- The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard,
- The staff is hardworking and committed, working diligently and in a collaborative manner to provide a broad and balanced education for the pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable.
- Music is taught effectively throughout the school.
- The school’s provision for pupils with additional educational needs is of very good quality.
- The school is inclusive and promotes the holistic development of its pupils to very good effect.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The school’s enrolment policy requires review.
- As whole-school curriculum plans are reviewed subject areas should specify content for each class level to facilitate continuity and progression.
- Ar mhaith le soláthar don Ghaeilge a thobar moltar cur chuige níos seasmháí ó rang go rang atá bunaithe ar thorthaí foighlama leanúnacha, céimníthe do cheithre snáitheanna an churaclam. In order to develop provision for Irish a more consistent approach from class to class is recommended, one that is based on agreed learning outcomes for the four strands of the curriculum.
- It is recommended that assessment for learning approaches are implemented at whole-school level.
3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets regularly and works hard in the interests of the pupils and the staff. Tasks are delegated and members display very good interest in supporting the operation of the school. School accounts are managed carefully and audited annually. The board should now consider issuing an annual report on the operation and work of the school.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is good. Day-to-day administration, organisation and maintenance of official records are progressed capably. The principal's role in advancing whole-school planning, action planning and facilitating the development of a collaborative working environment is commended. The other members of the in-school management team fulfil their assigned duties conscientiously and contribute beneficially to the management of the school. As a next step, it is advised that the descriptions of every post in official school documentation include a clearly delineated curriculum leadership function. Other members of the teaching staff are commended for their involvement in progressing planning for various curricular areas. Current descriptions of posts in school documents state that responsibility in respect of implementing child protection procedures is assigned to one post holder. The documents should be clarified to outline the specific duties of the post-holder in respect of these procedures and formally document that responsibility for implementation of the policy is a whole-school one coordinated by the board.

- The management of resources is effective overall. There have been quite a number of staff changes recently due primarily to a growth in pupil enrolment. At the time of the evaluation, some further staff changes were yet to be finalised. School records indicate there is regular rotation of staff. Teachers manifest a strong work ethic coupled with skilful teaching ability and their interest in continuous professional development is praised. During the evaluation, it was apparent that staff work well together, share approaches and engage in good-quality professional dialogue.

- The quality of the physical environment of the school is very good. School management is praised for the provision of all-weather playing facilities. It intends to further develop parking and access to the school. This would be a welcome improvement. A wide range of teaching resources is available and used effectively. There remains scope to augment the school store of physical mathematics resources for certain grades. Further large-format books should also be acquired.

- The management of relations with the school community is good. Almost all parents, in the questionnaires submitted to the inspection team, agreed that they were happy with the school. Additionally, the representatives of the parents’ association expressed very strong support for the work of the school. In particular the inclusive culture and kindness and enthusiasm of staff were highlighted. A small number of parents in questionnaire responses indicated that their views in relation to school operation are not sought. Going forward, it is recommended that further opportunities be provided to solicit parents’ views as part of the school development planning process. The sharing of policies and information with parents might be facilitated further through the medium of the school web site.

- During the evaluation, the management of pupils was very good. Pupils were very well-behaved, cooperative and motivated. Questionnaire responses reveal that most pupils who completed a questionnaire feel safe in class and in the playground and that they feel they can talk to a teacher if they are upset about something at school.
4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Administrative and organisation policies in a wide range of areas have been developed. Policies are generally comprehensive, presented clearly and contribute to the smooth general running of the school. The school's enrolment and admissions policy requires review. The board must ensure that enrolment criteria are outlined in order of priority. The policy must also be revised in respect of pupils with special educational needs to ensure it is in accordance with relevant legislation.

- Curriculum plans have been drafted that provide clear guidance on methodologies and approaches. Further development of plans is required in order to facilitate better continuity and progression from class to class in some subject areas. For example, the whole-school plan for Gaeilge should outline expectations of language outcomes at specific class levels. While action planning is employed very satisfactorily to progress agreed priorities, self-evaluation is at an early stage. Some processes have been commenced, with profiling of pupils' achievement in standardised tests carried out.

- All teachers provide long and short-term classroom planning. Classroom planning is, by and large, comprehensive and prepared conscientiously. Teachers prepare a range of activities and resources carefully for teaching and learning.

- 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

- Satisfactory work is happening in relation to specific areas of the school’s provision for Irish. Pupils display positive attitudes to the language. Among the positive practices observed teachers made good use of the interactive whiteboard and demonstration materials, the target language was adhered to and in certain lessons the very clear modelling of phrases and fundamental vocabulary. While many senior pupils have acquired a reasonably good vocabulary, there is still need to promote vocabulary enrichment and the use of verbs more consistently. During the day, there is scope for the further use of incidental Irish in classrooms. Going forward there is need to deploy a more consistent approach from class to class, one that is based on agreed learning outcomes for the four strands of the curriculum. A more extended pre-communicative phase, more listening and story and planning for the modelling of language more formally are recommended. There are appropriate texts for reading and pupils demonstrate good
pronunciation during it. A satisfactory standard is evident in functional writing but more opportunities for independent writing are recommended.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Most pupils express themselves confidently and articulately and they listen well. Individually, teachers have selected various resources to develop pupils’ oral language. Standardised test results indicate that reading standards are good overall with some pupils achieving very well. Independent reading is fostered appropriately and good discussion about text takes place during lessons. There is need in some cases, however, to further differentiate reading material to accommodate the individual needs of pupils. The work done in developing writing is commendable. Pupils have plentiful and worthwhile opportunities to write and the majority write confidently. Further use of formal scaffolds and a focus on vocabulary enrichment would be beneficial in some classrooms. While written work is presented well in the main, teachers have identified penmanship as a priority for improvement.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable. The results of standardised tests indicate that many pupils are achieving very good standards in Mathematics. Good-quality early mathematical experiences are provided. Throughout the school, most pupils have a sound knowledge of tables and a good understanding of key number concepts. During the evaluation, lessons incorporated good consolidation and reinforcement activities. While manipulation of physical material featured during lessons, there remains scope to extend the use of physical material to support active learning. Copybook work is presented well and is monitored regularly by teachers.

- Music is taught well in the school. The pupils experience a broad curriculum. During the evaluation, information and communications technologies were used very effectively in helping pupils to listen and respond to music. Song-singing is of a good standard. There is some promising work underway in literacy and composition. However, there needs to be further discussion around expected progression from class to class in both areas. Good use of percussion was noted in a number of classrooms. In addition, many pupils play an instrument and a number of teachers facilitate this very beneficially by providing lunch-time workshops. Some teachers teach tin whistle as part of their music programme. This is good practice and should form part of a whole-school approach.

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning in this school is strong and much work is of a very good standard. Teachers have very good rapport with their pupils. A wide range of appropriate teaching methodologies is used. The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) during direct teaching is commended but the hands-on use by pupils should be extended. Effective whole-class teaching was observed. Small group teaching was also observed in some lessons. Questioning of pupils was thorough and of good quality. Grade-specific teaching should be expanded.

- Standardised test results are collated and stored carefully for most grades. School management reports its intention to expand the number of grades to be tested this year. Good-quality classroom assessment practices were observed in different classroom settings, with records of individual pupils in evidence. It is recommended that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) guidelines on assessment be used to identify and support whole-school implementation of a wider range of assessment for learning strategies.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils is very good and the staged approach to provision is implemented. Four teachers provide specific support to pupils with additional learning
needs. While all work very diligently and effectively, rationalisation of the several shared support-teaching posts is required. Interactions with pupils take place in attractive, stimulating and supportive learning environments. Rooms are resourced well. At whole-school level more opportunities to celebrate the multicultural context of the school are advocated.

- Very good-quality individualised plans and short-term plans guide teaching. Much individualised planning is of a high standard including time-bound and readily measurable learning targets. There is good maintenance of clear progress records. Well-targeted teaching, that incorporated participative and collaborative learning and employment of pupils' personal interests, was observed. Lessons focused successfully on pupils' assessed needs. Appropriate use was made of supporting resources, practical situations and real-life examples. Pupils were encouraged to reflect and consolidation of learning took place. Understanding of concepts and progression in pupils' understanding are assessed and recorded. Suitable progress is being made generally by pupils in receipt of additional support.

*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

- The Board of Management wishes to thank the inspectors for their courtesy during the inspection process.
- We feel the report is a fair and balanced reflection of teaching, learning, planning and management of our school.
- The Board of Management would like to thank the reporting inspectors for acknowledging the ongoing commitment and hard work of our very dedicated staff and members of the Board of Management.

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 Butlersbridge Central N.S. have considered the key recommendations in the report and are currently working together to facilitate their effective implementation as part of the schools ongoing process of self evaluation and planning.