An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naomh Bríde
Drumkeerin, County Leitrim
Uimhir rolla: 19360L

Date of inspection: 19 September 2012
1. Introduction

Scoil Naomh Bride is a mainstream, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kilmore. Seventy-two pupils are distributed across three multi-grade classrooms and overall attendance levels are good. During this whole-school evaluation, provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Drama 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:

- The board of management works purposefully and the chairperson provides very positive assistance.
- Home-school communication is very good. Parents are very supportive.
- In-school management is highly commendable. The principal works in a very effective manner and provides excellent curriculum leadership.
- The school atmosphere is very welcoming and inclusive.
- Overall teaching is skilful, well-paced and effective and learning outcomes for literacy, numeracy and Drama, in particular, are strong.
- Whole-school planning and mainstream teachers’ preparation and planning are of a good standard.
- The pupils’ behaviour is praiseworthy. Teacher-pupil rapport is very good and the pupils are very co-operative learners.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Pupils’ confidence in the Irish language should be strengthened and learning progress across the four curricular strands should be monitored carefully.
- Aspects of whole-school assessment should be developed further.
- Aspects of the support for pupils with additional learning needs should be reviewed.

3. Quality of School Management

- School management is very effective. The board of management works purposefully. It conducts regular meetings and its decisions are documented clearly. Accounts are certified and the board partakes in policy ratification and review. Appropriately, it publishes an annual report on its work. The chairperson visits regularly and provides very positive assistance.
- In-school management is highly commendable. Day-to-day organisation and routines are efficient. The atmosphere is very welcoming and inclusive. There are two post holders
and very high-level commitment is evident from both. The principal works in a very effective and conscientious manner and provides excellent curriculum leadership. Official records are maintained with care. The special duties’ teacher carries out her assigned duties in a proactive, dedicated manner. All teachers show strong commitment to school improvement and are very willing to embrace change. School management reports very high levels of satisfaction with work of the secretary, cleaner and caretaker.

- Resources are managed carefully. The building and grounds present well and are maintained appropriately. Classrooms are bright and learner centred. A good range of teaching resources is available including interactive white boards in the mainstream classrooms. Additional and consistent computer access is recommended for pupils and this will necessitate further investment in computer hardware, as resources permit.

- During the evaluation, the pupils’ behaviour was praiseworthy. Questionnaire results confirm that pupils are listened to, get on well together and feel safe in the classroom.

- Evidence indicates that home-school communication is very good. Relevant policies are shared with parents and some are available on the school web site. The introduction of new-format end-of-year report cards, as advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, has proven successful. Parents are very supportive. Questionnaire responses indicate high levels of satisfaction by parents with school discipline, organisation, atmosphere, teaching, and the social and personal development of pupils. The parents’ association works diligently providing financial support and practical assistance to a range of activities. Going forward, school management hopes to encourage further parental involvement in policy development and review.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The quality of planning is good overall. Lead ably by the principal, all teachers partake diligently in policy development and review. Commendably, elements of school self-evaluation have commenced, for example the monitoring of pupils’ achievement in standardised tests.

- Mainstream teachers’ classroom planning and preparation are of a good standard. A whole-school approach is implemented.

- 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**

- Overall teaching is skilful, well-paced and effective. Teachers approach their work very conscientiously. Teacher-pupil rapport is very good and the pupils are very co-operative learners. Learning outcomes for literacy, numeracy and Drama, in particular, are strong. Teachers exchange classes for certain subjects and appropriately, teachers intend to review this practice on a regular basis. Questionnaire results indicate that the majority of pupils like school.

- Tá obair shásúil ar siúl i ngnéithe áirthe do sholáthar na Gaeilge. Le linn na cigireachta, baineadh féidhm as raon leathan modhanna múinte. Múineadh ábhar cuí idir fhoclóir, chruthú agus struchtúir agus díríodh aird mhaith ar thréimhse an cheachta. Tá sé rí-
Satisfactory work is evident in various aspects of provision in Irish. During the evaluation, use was made of a wide range of teaching methods. Appropriate content was taught including vocabulary, phrases and structure and good attention was paid to the stages of lessons. It is important, however, to use Irish continuously as the medium of instruction. In every lesson, pupils had opportunities to speak about the themes undertaken. However, some pupils lacked confidence in speaking more generally outside of the specific lesson content. It is recommended that daily conversational Irish be strengthened in all classrooms. It would be beneficial also if Irish was used as the language medium in another subject area of the curriculum. A satisfactory standard is achieved in functional writing. However, further emphasis should be placed on free writing. In general, pupils read with accuracy. Moving forward, there is need to outline the learning outcomes for pupils for all four strands of the curriculum and to implement evaluative processes that would inform the teaching of Irish more definitively.

Provision for English is strong. Listening, speaking and poetry activities are successful. Early literacy work as observed in the junior room is very good. The introduction of formal reading, however, should be delayed in line with curricular guidelines. In the middle and senior rooms, reading experiences are varied and differentiated. Independent reading is encouraged. There are plans underway to audit and organise classroom libraries. Standardised test results for English reading are good. The pupils write regularly in various genres. Teachers are working to develop the pupils’ writing skills. In so doing, additional focus on vocabulary enrichment will be beneficial. Handwriting and spelling standards are generally good. The introduction of cursive writing at an earlier stage is advised.

Provision for Mathematics is effective. Observed lessons were presented clearly and very well structured. Linkage across the strands was good and pupils were enabled to use specific mathematical language accurately. Their knowledge of tables and number facts is appropriate and they record their work very carefully. Standardised test results are good overall. Further emphasis on developing the pupils’ conceptual development of measurement is recommended.

Provision for Drama is very good. Teachers demonstrate a very clear understanding of the elements of drama. Teaching is creative and careful attention is paid to the necessary prerequisites for making drama: content; the fictional lens; and a safe environment. The pupils are encouraged skillfully to co-operate and communicate and their reflection on drama is very well handled. There is regular and effective integration with other curricular areas.

Some aspects of whole-school assessment are working well. For example, non-reading intelligence tests, standardised tests and screening tests are administered. Additionally, in-class tests are regular and purposeful and pupils’ progress is monitored carefully in literacy and numeracy. The use of diagnostic testing should be extended and whole-
school assessment in Irish and spelling should be considered. Additionally, the use of assessment for learning approaches should be increased.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with additional educational needs is satisfactory overall. Two teachers, one of whom is based in the school, provide specific support in this area. Currently, the school has three and a quarter resource-teaching hours and fifteen hours of learning support per week. Observed teaching in both the resource and learning-support contexts was skilful, resource rich and affirming. Teachers work in a flexible manner adapting interventions to match the priorities of the school.

- Using withdrawal, support is provided in literacy or numeracy, as appropriate. In reviewing learning-support provision, small-group sizes should be maximised and whole-class interventions should be reviewed regularly. Both teachers undertake regular planning and recording of progress. As a next step, comprehensive termly reviews, informed by all relevant parties, should be completed. Useful individual educational programmes have been outlined for resource teaching. There is need, however, for more specificity in planning for learning support.

- The pupils’ contribution to and involvement in the local community are emphasised successfully. Pupils partake in a range of worthwhile co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Activities include educational trips, concerts, quizzes, sports, various competitions and charity fundraisers. Pupils also participate in National Children’s Choir events. Fundraising by the parents’ association helps offset the additional costs in facilitating such activities. The school has been awarded two green flags for its environmental initiatives.
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 NS, Drumkeerin wishes to acknowledge the professional and thorough manner in which our evaluation was carried out by the inspector. Furthermore, we thank her for her courtesy and understanding throughout the process. We welcome the positive, practical support that she has provided for our school.

We are pleased that the report recognises the work of the whole school community and affirms the contribution of pupils, parents, teaching staff, ancillary staff and management. The results of the surveys from parents and children were very positive and heartening.

We welcome the findings of the report with regard to the standards of teaching and learning, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. These findings reflect the dedication shown by our teaching staff.

We are committed to ongoing self-evaluation and development and, in this spirit, we are already implementing the recommendations contained in the report.

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

- In line with the recommendations made in the report we will work to further develop assessment across the school by increasing the levels of diagnostic testing and by introducing standardised testing of Irish.

- Déanfaimid fíor-líarracht Gaeilge mar mheán cumarsáide a fhorbairt agus úsáidfimid í chun Corp-oideachas a mhúineadh.

- We will continuously evaluate the way in which we provide learning support to ensure that it is appropriate to the changing needs of the children and the school.