

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bhríde JNS
Donaghmede, Dublin 13
Uimhir rolla: 19473B

Date of inspection: 12 November 2010



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

1. Introduction

Scoil Bhríde Junior National School, Donaghmede is a 19 teacher school with an enrolment of 336 pupils from junior infants to second class. An early intervention and junior autism unit, with a current enrolment of 12 pupils, has been recently established within the school. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

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 JNS is effectively and efficiently managed.
- The school principal is an insightful leader who has succeeded in creating a collaborative school culture among teachers and between the board, teachers and parents.
- Teachers skilfully create a positive learning environment for pupils; they structure purposeful lessons with a strong and appropriate emphasis on making learning meaningful to pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of what they have been taught and they enjoy their learning.
- The quality of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision within the school is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Better provision for more able pupils should be made within classrooms. This is particularly relevant to the teaching of Mathematics. This provision should be informed by a careful analysis of standardised test results.
- The current model of in-class support requires development to optimise its impact on pupils' learning.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management fulfils its functions very effectively, particularly in terms of developing, funding and maintaining the facilities and resources necessary to create a safe and appropriate learning environment for pupils.
- The school principal is an insightful leader who has been successful in overseeing the development of an effective planning process and the cultivation of a collaborative school culture, which promotes and supports teacher professional development.

- The work of the in-school management team is good, with clearly delineated areas of responsibilities: a coherent strategic plan sets out relevant and achievable goals and strategies.
- The management of pupils is of a very good standard, particularly in terms of organisational routines. This results in a safe, ordered and happy learning environment for pupils.
- The quality of the management of relationships with parents is very good. Clearly identified and effective channels of communication between the home and school are evident. In a questionnaire completed by a sample of parents during this inspection, the majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school is good. It is notable that a system for involving parents in supporting pupils' learning in the infant classrooms has been developed and implemented successfully.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good with evidence of collaboration between teachers, board and parents and the development of an effective strategic plan.
- Organisational plans are very specific and are implemented effectively. Their contribution to creating an ordered learning environment is significant. Future reviews of curriculum planning should aim to produce plans which focus on documenting practice specific to the school.
- Teachers' individual planning is good. More careful attention to providing for more able pupils within their planning would enhance the capacity of teachers to create more challenging learning experiences for these pupils.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith ar an iomlán. Cothaítear scileanna éisteachta agus labhartha go héifeachtúil. Tá raon deas rann agus amhrán ar eolas ag na daltaí. Cuirtear béim mhaith ar thuiscint na ndaltaí a fhorbairt agus tá stóras fairsing focal agus frásaí ar eolas ag na daltaí. Tá scileanna na réamhléitheoireachta agus scríbeoireachta á bhforbairt go sásúil le lipéidí, luas chartaí agus abairtí simplí a léamh agus a scríobh. Chun teagasc sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt, moltar go mbeadh na daltaí ag éisteacht le níos mó Gaeilge leanúnach sna ceachtanna agus go mbeadh cuspóirí cinnte a ghabhann le gach ceacht rianaithe i ngach rang.

The standard of learning in Irish is good in general. Listening and speaking skills are skilfully developed. Pupils know a good range of rhymes and songs. A good emphasis is

placed on developing pupils' understanding and pupils have acquired a good store of words and phrases. Pre-reading and pre-writing skills are developed satisfactorily through captions, flash-cards and the writing of simple sentences. To develop the teaching of Irish, it is recommended that pupils need to hear more continuous Irish during lessons and it is important that clear objectives underpin all lessons

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good. Pupils have good oral language skills. Dedicated lessons, open questioning and a strong emphasis on poetry and rhyme are effective in developing the quality of pupils' oral expression. An emphasis is also effectively placed on the development of the oral language dimension to other curriculum areas. Pupils have very good phonological awareness skills and demonstrate a good ability to apply these skills in their independent writing. The teaching and promotion of good quality letter formation is effectively undertaken.
- A systematic approach is taken to the development of reading skills and good attention is paid to recording pupils' progress. While pupils have good word-attack skills, a greater emphasis on the achievement of a more equitable balance between the development of phonological awareness skills, grapho-phonemic skills and comprehension skills as part of an integrated reading experience is advocated. The importance of teaching high-frequency words is recognised by teachers. However, further reinforcement is required to optimise pupils' learning. Pupils need to develop greater fluency in reading aloud. The provision of additional reading material appropriate to pupils' reading ability needs to be more carefully considered. The current development of the school library will assist teachers in their endeavours to provide pupils with a rich and varied range of reading material.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Lessons have very good pace, direction and focus. Lesson content is effectively linked to the experience and environment of the pupils. Pupils are actively involved in these lessons with good provision for reasoning, estimating and communicating skills. In general, exemplary use is made of concrete materials to facilitate activity-based learning. Many teachers ensure that they carefully teach the language that is essential for understanding the concepts of Mathematics. This approach is of particular benefit to pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) and should be extended even further. Additional differentiation of mathematical activities, in respect of more able pupils, in particular, would ensure greater clarity in learning outcomes for pupils. The further development of in-class support models to promote activity-based pair and group work for all pupils is recommended.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is good. Science lessons are well structured and provide meaningful opportunities for the development of the pupils' knowledge and skills. Teaching is effective, a range of resources is used and opportunities are exploited to regularly engage pupils in active, experimental work. A review of the monthly progress reports indicates that the majority of teachers deliver a broad programme across the four curriculum strands. However, there remains potential to extend the range of content covered from year to year.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Classrooms present as ordered learning environments. Lessons are effectively structured, and appropriately taught with good pacing by means of a range of suitable and well-managed activities. There are examples of clear learning objectives being shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and consolidated at the conclusion of lessons. Pupil achievement is generally good. However, in general, teachers need to make better provision for more able pupils.

- The provision of additional learning experiences such as participation in the Green Schools programme, the school choir, GAA training and the welcoming of a rich range of visitors to the school are evidence of teachers' interest in providing pupils with a wide range of stimulating and holistic learning experiences, particularly in terms of the Arts and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). Teachers demonstrate a commendable commitment to on-going professional development and to ensuring that this contributes to the development of the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with particular learning needs is generally good. Effective aspects of practice are the clear identification of pupils' needs, the development of focused plans for addressing these needs and the effective delivery of the provision within the withdrawal setting. There is scope for development with regard to the provision of support within the mainstream setting. This provision needs to be group-focused so that it can better mediate the interaction of pupils with both the mainstream curriculum and their class peers.
- Existing good quality provision for pupils for whom English is an Additional Language needs to incorporate more in-class support that focuses on the development of cognitive language.
- The quality of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision within the school is very good. The role of the principal in bringing the unit to fruition and in leading progress to its implementation is acknowledged. Planning and policy development is of a very high standard, with a strong emphasis being placed on differentiation for individual needs. The school provides well-planned opportunities for pupils with ASD to be included in activities with pupils in mainstream classes. The individual education plan (IEP) process facilitates the involvement of teachers, parents and clinical support personnel in identifying and planning for priority needs and goals. The classrooms are well equipped with materials for curricular areas. However, the current site of the ball-play room is inconvenient and its re-location should be considered.
- The quality of teaching in the ASD unit is very high. Skills are taught in sequential steps through direct, individualised instruction using appropriate signing when required. Commendable encouragement is given to the development of play and imagination. The use of Music and song-singing in the early intervention unit is excellent and is worthy of particular commendation. The special needs assistants (SNAs) contribute very positively to the quality of the overall provision. Teachers and SNAs collaborate very effectively and interact in a caring and supportive manner with the pupils.

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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

1. The Board of Management welcomes the report and expresses its satisfaction with the positive thrust of the document as well as with the helpful and courteous manner in which the evaluation was carried out.
2. The recommendations and suggestions contained in the report will be taken on board in the future work of the school.
3. While the board recognises the value of technical language in a professional report it would be happy if the needs of lay members of the board and of the school community generally were given greater consideration in the drafting of the report. (The board found the comment that *“while pupils have good word-attack skills, a greater emphasis on the achievement of a more equitable balance between the development of phonological awareness skills, grapho-phonemic skills and comprehension skills as part of an integrated reading experience is advocated.”* somewhat obtuse.)

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