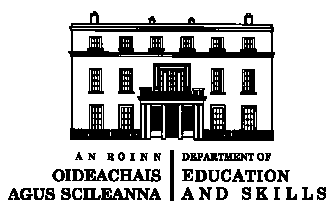


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Bernadette's Senior National School
Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 19785U

Date of inspection: 01 February 2012



1. Introduction

St. Bernadette's SNS is a mixed, senior primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. This DEIS Band 1 school, shares its campus with St. Bernadette's JNS. The school has achieved very good success in raising the overall attendance levels of the 220 pupils on rolls. 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:

- All staff members successfully foster an inclusive, school environment through their supportive interactions with pupils and the delivery of a comprehensive social, personal and health education (SPHE) programme.
- The dedicated principal displays very good organisational and management skills.
- The management of resources is very good; the school building and grounds are in excellent order and there are very good teaching and learning resources available.
- The school has successfully implemented attendance-promotion strategies and attendance levels are significantly improved in recent years.
- The teachers are expressive communicators and prepare attractive learning environments.
- The pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic; it is evident that the teachers are committed to their holistic development.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Teachers should use a wider range of teaching methodologies in order to raise pupil-participation levels and ensure consolidation of learning.
- Curriculum plans need to reflect the context of the pupils and comprehensively guide all aspects of practice. Classroom planning should incorporate learning objectives that are focused on the pupils' assessed learning needs.
- There is need for the curriculum leadership roles of management to be enhanced as they coordinate the review, implementation and monitoring of new methodologies and programmes. The school should liaise with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) to support improvement in the teaching of English and Mathematics.
- A systematic, whole-school approach to assessment is required; teachers should use agreed assessment strategies to track the pupils' learning and to inform planning.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A review of special education needs provision is required with specific regard to teacher deployment, collaboration, pupil selection, assessment, and programme planning and delivery. |
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3. Quality of School Management

- The newly-formed board of management is aware of its obligations and roles and is clearly committed to using its expertise for school improvement. The principal displays very good organisational and management skills. He is dedicated to raising standards and he successfully promotes an inclusive, welcoming environment. The in-school management team carry out a range of duties with dedication and commitment. Given the considerable challenge facing the school in raising standards, it is necessary for those in management at all levels to significantly develop their curriculum leadership roles.
- The management of resources is very good. The school is equipped with a broad range of appropriate resources, including a well-stocked library. The school grounds, building and garden are in excellent order and are very well maintained. All ancillary staff members carry out their roles very capably.
- There are good communication channels in place, which include newsletters, school newspaper, journals, regular meetings, school reports and informal communications. Parents report that this is a welcoming school with an open-door policy. They give support at school events, sports, curriculum days, charitable activities and fund-raising. The school aims to enhance the participation of parents in policy development and in educational activities within the school.
- There is good management of pupils. Teachers foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and successfully implement a whole-school, positive-discipline programme. The pupils are well behaved, display good application and are eager to share their learning. In the pupil questionnaires, most pupils agree that they feel safe and know the rules, they can talk to their teachers and they agree that it is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process has scope for development. All administrative policies give very good guidance on all aspects of school life. The curriculum plans should fully reflect the context and learning needs of pupils. It is recommended that a phased review of these plans be undertaken to ensure there is explicit guidance on all aspects of teaching and learning for each class-level.
- The quality of teachers' planning is fair. The teachers' long- and short-term plans are quite general in nature. All planning should be directly informed by whole-school plans, and tailored to the assessed needs and abilities of the pupils. Particular attention is required regarding differentiation and methodologies.
- The school's DEIS action plan outlines targets and actions for school improvement. The comprehensive collation and initial analysis of cumulative standardised tests provides important baseline data on pupils' learning needs. This data needs to be supported by a range of other evidence, for example classroom-based assessment records, as the

school engages in school self-evaluation. It is recommended that management ensure that all teachers engage in a highly-collaborative process of data analysis, action planning and programme monitoring and review.

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the 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 and learning requires significant development in order to meet the diverse range of learning needs in this school. Teachers are expressive communicators; they prepare attractive environments, and engage the pupils well during learning activities. The pupils are eager to learn and to share their achievements.
- As a starting point for all class programmes, the teachers should identify the specific learning needs of pupils through diagnostic assessments. The use by teachers of research-based, effective teaching methodologies is required. Teachers should focus on the explicit teaching of key concepts and skills, raising pupil-participation levels, and thorough revision and consolidation. The school needs to implement agreed approaches to assessment and to classroom-based records which track the pupils' learning on an ongoing basis.
- Tá gnéithe suntasacha le forbairt sna straitéisí le haghaidh múineadh agus foghlaim na Gaeilge. Feictear úsáid chuí as achmhainní, taispeántais, amhráin, rainn, agus as cluichí i gceachtanna. Ar an iomlán níl dóthain béime curtha ar an modh cumarsáide agus ní féidir le cuid is mó de na daltaí ceisteanna bunúsacha a chur agus a fhreagairt. Moltar rannpháirtíocht agus caighdeán labhairt na ndaltaí a fheabhsú trí thascanna comhoibrítheacha agus gníomhaíochtaí drámaíochta a eagrú. Ní mór cláir chéimnithe don léitheoireacht agus don scríbhneoireacht a dhearadh chun taitneamh agus dúshlán a thabhairt do na daltaí ina gcuid foghlama.

Approaches to the teaching and learning of Irish require significant change. The use of appropriate resources, displays, songs, rhymes and games was observed in lessons. Overall there is insufficient emphasis on the communicative approach and many pupils are not able to pose and answer simple questions. It is recommended that the pupils' participation levels and standards of speaking be improved through the use of paired tasks and drama techniques. Progressive programmes for reading and writing are required, which provide an appropriate level of challenge and enjoyment to pupils.

- There is significant scope for development regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English. Pupils have regular opportunities to read through individual, paired, shared and buddy-reading. The implementation of a whole-school approach to the teaching and development of specific reading skills should now be a priority. All teachers should engage in structured reading sessions, the use of parallel-reading schemes, and the explicit teaching of phonics, comprehension and word-attack skills which are monitored and assessed regularly. Reading material should be graded to match the pupils' abilities and interests.
- Good work is underway in the recitation, writing and exploration of poetry. The pupils engage in extensive writing activities which are attractively displayed. More in-depth study of a limited range of genres is advised with emphasis on clear benchmarks for each class in terms of content, presentation and engagement with the process of writing. The

pupils engage enthusiastically in discussions and oral-language games; this good work should be complemented by the teaching of specific oral skills during planned discrete lessons.

- Overall the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics has significant scope for development. A review of school data, pupils' copies, and inspector tasks and questions highlight that most pupils are experiencing significant difficulty regarding their computational and problem-solving skills across all strands. Aspects of good practice include the use of 'maths-recovery' strategies, resources and some stimulating activities. The challenge for teachers is to ensure that programmes and lessons are focused on the pupils' assessed learning needs. Lessons should incorporate highly-participative oral work, clear teaching of concepts and operations, and differentiated learning tasks. Consistent reinforcement and consolidation will be essential in order to sustain improvements in standards. To this end, the use of criterion-referenced assessment on an ongoing basis is advised.
- The school should liaise with the PDST to support improvement in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in SPHE is good. An inclusive, supportive environment and a positive atmosphere are fostered throughout the school and in the classrooms. Lessons are well taught; pupils are enabled to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and values through activity-based learning and decision-making opportunities. There is good use of story, drama and poetry to engage pupils in their learning. The pupils are enabled to care for the environment and their community through their Green School actions and it is praiseworthy that they have achieved their second flag.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall provision of support for pupils with special education needs requires significant change. In lessons observed, teachers were supportive towards pupils, there was good interaction and discussion, and some tailored learning activities. Overall, there are varied approaches to provision. The deployment as mainstream teachers of teachers who were allocated to the school for learning-support and resource teaching should be reviewed as a priority in order to meet the specific learning needs of targeted pupils. The full team should meet regularly to ensure the effective delivery of support. This includes greater collaboration with class teachers and parents; extended use of diagnostic tools and professional reports to identify, inform and review targets in education plans; and the continued exploration of models of in-class support.
- There are good quality supports to meet the care and welfare needs of all pupils. The coordinators for home-school-community liaison and school-completion-programme, the teaching staff and external agencies provide a good range of suitable clubs, extra-curricular activities, courses and programmes for pupils and parents. There are effective strategies in place to promote pupil attendance and to ensure their smooth transfer to and participation in post-primary education. The school is justly proud of its sporting achievements.

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, on behalf of the whole school staff, would like to thank the inspection team for the courtesy displayed during their visit to the school.

The Board of Management is delighted to note that school management consists of very good organisational and management skills with dedication and commitment, whereby the management of resources is very good and good communication channels are in place.

We are pleased with the acknowledgement of the teaching staff, who foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and successfully implement a whole school, positive – discipline programme leading to the good behaviour of pupils and their enthusiasm for learning. The Board of Management also welcomes the recognition of the successfully implemented attendance promotion strategies whereby attendance levels are significantly improved.

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 school staff, as a team, is engaged in on-going work in addressing the challenges identified in the report.