

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**St Brigid's Infant National School**  
**Wellmount Avenue, Dublin 11**  
**Uimhir rolla: 20029M**

**Date of inspection: 13 February 2014**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Brigid's Infant National School caters for pupils from junior infants to first class. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and participates in Delivering Educational Improvement in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. 204 pupils are enrolled in the school. The school is proactive in monitoring and encouraging pupil attendance which, overall, is good. 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 systematically to support the development of the school.
- The principal and in-school management team actively and successfully promote a warm, nurturing and inclusive school environment, where the uniqueness of each child is cherished and celebrated.
- Teachers make very good use of a range of methodologies in their work, preparing and delivering their lessons in a very engaging and structured manner.
- Pupils are very content in this school environment, showing pride and interest in their learning.
- Pupil progress in literacy and numeracy is high.
- The school is active in employing a range of interventions and strategies to develop standards.
- Very positive links have been established with parents and the school community.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is delivered in a very supportive, structured and nurturing manner.
- The school benefits from an Early Start programme which provides very purposeful and engaging pre-school learning experiences for children.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Ní mór plean céimnithe a leagan amach don Ghaeilge labhartha i gcomthéacsanna foirmiúla agus neamhfhoirmiúla. *An incremental oral Irish plan should be devised for the development of language in formal and informal contexts.*
- In the development of the school's plans for literacy and numeracy, some targets should be reviewed.
- Consideration should be given to the establishment of a programme of early intervention for junior infant pupils in the domains of literacy and numeracy
- The school's approach to recording monthly progress reports should be reviewed to make greater provision for the delineation of curriculum implementation and progression in learning.

### 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management operates in a focused, collaborative and systematic manner. It successfully promotes an inclusive environment for pupils, managing resources carefully and strategically. Minutes of meetings are recorded and school accounts are audited. In some instances, minutes could provide more detailed information on school financial matters.
- The school is led by a committed and enthusiastic principal who successfully empowers colleagues to engage with change and initiatives aimed at developing standards. She is keenly interested in the progress of pupils and actively cultivates a warm and nurturing school environment where the individuality and uniqueness of each child is cherished. The principal is ably supported by an in-school management team which works in a purposeful and collaborative manner.
- The school has a wide range of resources to facilitate delivery of the curriculum. It consistently develops these resources, most notably the school library and other literacy materials. Ancillary staff makes an important contribution to the efficient functioning of the school.
- The management of pupils is very good. Teachers are highly commended for the respectful and nurturing way in which they interact with pupils. Pupils are very content and responsive during learning activities. Their behaviour was excellent during the evaluation.
- The school regularly communicates with the school community using a range of both formal and informal methods. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They provide valuable assistance to the school through a range of initiatives such as the breakfast club. The questionnaire data, administered during the evaluation, indicates that a very high proportion of parents think that their child is doing well in school.

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

- The overall quality of school planning is good. A broad range of organisational and curricular policies have been developed. The school's enrolment policy should be reviewed to ensure clarity and consistency in the application of enrolment criteria.
- As part of its school self-evaluation practices, the school has commendably engaged with a range of initiatives to further develop literacy and numeracy standards. The regular review of the impact of these initiatives over time would further contribute to their effectiveness. In the development of the school's numeracy plan, some targets should be reviewed with a view to locating number within the context of other strands of the curriculum. In the next review of literacy targets, it is recommended that more specific targets for reading achievements and skill development be established.
- In general, teachers' planning is of a very good quality. In some instances, however, methodologies, assessment strategies, integration and linkage approaches should be clearly outlined. It is recommended that the school's approach to recording monthly progress reports be reviewed to make greater provision for the delineation of curriculum implementation and progression in 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

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are delivered in a structured and focused manner, serving to stimulate and engage pupil interest. Activities are very well designed, providing pupils with a range of active and hands-on learning experiences. Cooperative learning is used to very good effect. A wide range of assessment practices are in operation, most notably in the fields of numeracy and literacy. Effective differentiation strategies are used to serve pupils' various learning needs.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith agus an-mhaith i gcuid de na ranganna. Eagraítear gníomhaíochtaí éisteachta oiriúnacha chun tuiscint na ndaltaí ar an teanga a éascú. Tá siad in ann abairtí simplí a chumadh agus raon ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt ag a leibhéal cumais agus aoise féin. Is fiú go mór tógail ar an obair mhaith seo agus plean céimnithe d'ábhar teanga a leagan amach agus a chur i bhfeidhm ar bhonn uile-scoile. Ní mór, leis, an Ghaeilge a úsáid go neamhfhoirmiúil níos rialta ar fud na scoile. Is inmholta mar a aithrisíonn na daltaí ar fad raon leathan de rainn agus d'amhráin.
- *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good and very good in some classrooms. Appropriate listening activities are organised to facilitate pupils' understanding of the language. They can construct simple sentences and ask and answer a range of questions commensurate with their ages and abilities. It would be worthwhile to build upon this good practice and devise and implement an incremental plan for language content on a whole-school basis. Irish should also be used informally on a more regular basis throughout the school. It is commendable that all pupils recite a wide repertoire of rhymes and songs.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is high. The school actively strives to develop pupils' literacy skills using a range of approaches. Pupils have a keen interest in reading and are making very good progress. Poetry, story and rhymes are used to very good effect. Good provision is in place for the development of pupils' writing skills. In some cases, however, greater emphasis should be placed on the improvement of writing content and conventions. While pupils' oral language is successfully developed, there is potential to identify and extend their cognitive applied language proficiency.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is high. The school employs a range of strategies and initiatives to target the development of specific mathematical skills and concepts. Mathematical language and mental arithmetic are systematically addressed throughout the school. Overall, good differentiation practices are in place, although in some instances, there is potential for greater differentiation of content for the more able. Cooperative learning, concrete resources and talk and discussion are used to very good effect. Pupils are afforded varied opportunities to interrogate concepts and develop problem solving skills. The school is well presented as a maths-rich learning environment and mathematical content is suitably linked to pupils' experiences. However, greater reference should be made to mathematics' trails and the use of the environment in the school policy. Effective assessment practices are also in operation.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education is very good. Lessons have a very good structure and pace. Pupils' skills are progressively developed. Overall, a suitable range of warm-up and cool-down activities is employed. Resources are used to good effect. Pupils are active in exploring, enjoying and expressing themselves during lessons.

## 6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is high. Support is provided in a nurturing and very structured manner, with pupils following clear, well-devised programmes. Teacher planning is of a good quality, with appropriate targets being set in

individual education plans (IEPs) and individual pupil learning programmes. While these programmes are discussed with parents, it would be advantageous to ensure that copies of IEPs be given to parents and parental roles clearly delineated in them. Pupil progress in the domains of numeracy and literacy is closely monitored.

- Lessons are well-structured and resources are used to very good effect, serving to engage and challenge pupils. Pupils participate enthusiastically in their work, being affirmed and encouraged at every opportunity. Collaborative team teaching and focused cooperative learning activities are used effectively to develop pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. Consideration should now be given to a programme of early intervention for pupils in junior infants. The special needs assistant provides valuable support to pupils and class teachers alike.
- The school benefits from the work of a full-time home school community liaison teacher. A broad selection of programmes and initiatives has been purposefully developed, underpinned by strategic planning. Parents are empowered to support their children's learning and to become involved in the life of the school.
- The school benefits from a school completion programme which complements many of the pastoral targets set out in its DEIS action plan. A number of valuable initiatives are in place, including drama therapy.
- In Early Start settings clear, well-established routines provide a secure, inclusive environment where children's well-being is well-nurtured. Adult-child relationships are progressively developed in a very affirmative learning atmosphere. Children's dispositions and social skills have been carefully nurtured, which contributes to their development as confident learners.
- Play-based methodologies underpin practice and pupils are afforded a suitable range of rich, age-appropriate learning activities. Individual and group activities are facilitated, having regard to children's interests and evolving needs. A wide range of resources is used judiciously to support learning and children can exercise choice regarding their engagement. The purposeful development of language, involving an appropriate emphasis on the development of pre-literacy and numeracy skills is commendable. More regular opportunities for outdoor play would further augment pupils' rich learning experiences.
- Baseline and formative assessment data is used appropriately to monitor children's development across all domains. The regular involvement of parents in their children's assessment and learning is praiseworthy.

*Published May 2014*

# **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 is very pleased that the inspection report accurately reflects the current quality of teaching and learning in St. Brigid's Infant School together with the support for pupils' well-being, the provision and use of resources, the partnership with parents and the leadership and overall management of the school.

**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, in consultation with the teaching staff, is putting structures in place to implement the recommendations contained in the report. Specifically, a review of the targets on numeracy and literacy has commenced and the plan to introduce early intervention in September 2014 has been activated. Progress will be monitored on an ongoing basis.