An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Bhríde NS, Ardough,
Bilboa, Co Carlow
Uimhir rolla: 18265M

Date of inspection: 18 September 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

1. Introduction

Scoil Bhríde NS Ardough, is a mainstream, co-educational primary school located in Bilboa on the Laois/Carlow/Kilkenny border. Under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, it espouses a Catholic ethos and endeavours to provide a full and enriching education to pupils. The twenty-two pupils are taught in two multi-grade classrooms. School attendance is very good. The school participates in the rural programme for Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and History was evaluated. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 and parent community are supportive of the work of the school.
- The principal has a clear vision for the development of the school and exhibits highly effective leadership qualities.
- Teachers work collaboratively and demonstrate a dedication and commitment to their work and to the needs of the children.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the four subjects evaluated is good.
- The management of pupils is of a very high standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Curriculum plans should be further developed to give clarity around specific learning objectives to be achieved at the different class levels and should further reflect the multi-grade context of the school.
- An assessment policy should be developed in order to ensure that programmes of work support and challenge the needs of all pupils.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is committed to developing the school as a central aspect of the local community. It is commended for the provision of a well-organised and well-resourced learning environment. School finances are managed carefully. The board plays an ongoing role in the ratification of organisational policies and curriculum plans. Further strategies to develop greater involvement of parents in the development process should be explored.
- The principal is committed and diligent and prioritises her instructional leadership role. She competently combines the leadership and management of the school with her

teaching duties. She oversees the implementation of the school improvement action plan which incorporates literacy and numeracy strategies. Formal meetings are held with the special duties teacher on a regular basis and minutes are maintained. The special duties teacher is highly supportive of the work of the principal and conscientiously undertakes a range of assigned duties.

- The management of relationships and communications within the school community is very good. The parent community supports the work of the school. The establishment of a parent's association should be considered. In questionnaires, the vast majority of parents reported that they were happy with the education provided by the school and all parents reported that they felt welcome in the school. The school communicates effectively with parents on the daily life of the school through newsletters. Parents are informed of their children's learning progress through the annual parent teacher meeting and the school report.

- Resources are managed effectively in the school. Positive working relationships are evident and all members of staff work collaboratively in the best interests of pupils. Indoor and outdoor areas present as comfortable, stimulating and well-resourced. The building and its grounds are maintained to a very high standard. Classroom environments are well organised. There are plentiful resources available to support literacy and numeracy. Classroom displays celebrate the pupils' written, creative and environmental work. The smooth operation of the school would be enhanced with some degree of secretarial support.

- The management of pupils is very good. The differential in class sizes should be kept under continuous review by the board. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided together with a range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities to enable pupils to develop holistically. The majority of pupils report in questionnaires that they enjoy positive relationships at school and are achieving well in reading and Mathematics.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of whole-school planning is very good. Organisational plans are contextualised to the needs of the school. Curriculum plans for the four subjects areas evaluated are of a high quality and inform teachers' planning and practice. The school has prioritised oral language development, penmanship and mathematical language for development. The school is advised to clarify specific content objectives to be achieved at each class level to ensure continuity and development throughout the school. Commendably, the school has commenced the process of school self-evaluation through the ongoing reflective practice of teachers.

- The quality of teachers' individual planning is good and short-term plans are of a very high quality. Planning is aligned to whole-school plans and reflects the structure and format of the curriculum. The school is advised to develop a format for maintaining monthly progress reports so that an accurate record of pupils' learning progress is maintained for each curricular area to allow for progression and continuity to be more easily evaluated across the school.

- 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 overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. Teachers display proficient classroom management skills. Good use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers is evident in both classrooms. Daily activities in the infant classroom provide pupils with opportunities to interact and be creative. The effective use of active learning and guided discovery methodologies and the use of appropriate stimulating resources support the development of pupils' emerging concepts and skills. In the senior classes, pupils participate in active learning and high levels of pupil engagement were observed. Pupils are able to discuss aspects of their learning with confidence and competence. Written work is well monitored by teachers. While there is some provision for differentiation in each class, this should be developed further to enhance the implementation of the spiral and developmental nature of the curriculum.

- Provision for assessment of learning is good. Standardised tests are administered annually and records are well maintained. Commendably, results are analysed at an individual and at a whole-school level. While teachers undertake some assessment for learning, there is scope to develop this aspect of the practice. This should be included in the assessment policy which is being development by the school. The school is advised to use *Assessment in Primary Schools* (2004, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) in developing assessment for and of learning approaches.

- Cé go bhfuil caighdeán maith ag baint le teagasc na Gaeilge, tá scóp chun forbartha i scileanna éisteachta agus labhartha na ndaltaí sa teanga. Baintear úsáid as modhanna múinte oiriúnacha agus abháir léirithe chun an fhoclóir a fhorbairt ach b'fhiú breis béime a chur ar fhorbairt cumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí agus ar obair ó bhéal as Gaeilge. Tá caighdeán na léitheoireachta agus na scríbhneoireachta go maith.

- *While the standard of teaching in Irish is good, there is scope for development of the pupils' listening and speaking skills in the language. Satisfactory teaching approaches and visual aids are used to develop the language, however further emphasis should be placed on developing pupils' communicative skills and on oral work in Irish. The standard of reading and writing in Irish is good.*

- Effective practice is evident in the teaching and learning of English. Further attention should be given to the development of pupils' oral language skills and this should be prioritised as part of the literacy plan. Discrete oral language time should be an element of each English lesson. Pupils engage with a wide range of reading materials and differentiated parallel readers are used in the classrooms. A structured approach to the teaching of phonics is recommended. Pupils at each class level are provided with regular opportunities to write and a good emphasis is placed on the writing process. A more consistent application of the school's handwriting policy is advised with a greater focus on the presentation of pupils' work. Pupils are given opportunities to listen to, read, learn, recite and respond to a range of age-appropriate jingles, rhymes and poems.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is commendable. The school has identified problem-solving skills as a priority area for development. A good focus is placed on oral and mental mathematics in all classrooms. The use of appropriate mathematical language should be further developed. Lessons observed were characterised by the successful use of resources, including ICT. Pupils were enabled to co-operate with one another in many mathematical settings. Pupils display a positive attitude to Mathematics.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in History is very good. Lessons build on pupils' existing knowledge, skills and attitudes. Discussion, story, maps, photographs, ICT and collaborative group work are used effectively to develop pupils' historical understanding. Further emphasis should be placed on linking lesson content with the key elements of the history curriculum.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- There is good quality support for pupils with special or additional educational needs. Based elsewhere, a learning support and a resource teacher provide support for children with additional needs in the school. The school has focused on the introduction of early intervention strategies in the new learning support policy. Comprehensive individual plans are in place for all pupils in receipt of support teaching and these are shared with teachers. There is scope for the development of clearer links between the individual education plans (IEPs) and the content of psychological reports. The development of the assessment policy should be prioritised to reflect the good work of the school. Commendably, the school is developing a model of provision for short term in-class support. The teaching and learning observed was characterised by affirming teacher-pupil relationships and was clearly linked to pupils' learning targets.

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