An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Scoil Naomh Bridhid
Glenmakee, Carndonagh
County Donegal

Uimhir rolla: 16836T

Date of inspection: 03 June 2015

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

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Scoil Naomh Bridhid in June 2015. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires, and a selection of school documents. 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.

Scoil Naomh Bridhid, under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry, has ninety-seven pupils enrolled. Enrolment has increased significantly in recent years. School attendance is very good. There are four mainstream class teachers, one support teacher, two full-time and one part-time special-needs assistants on the staff. A visiting resource teacher also attends. The school participates in the school support programme of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Scheme (DEIS).

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The board of management functions very effectively and is committed to school development.
- The leadership provided by the principal is highly praiseworthy and actions implemented as part of school self-evaluation are having a very positive impact on learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy.
- The teaching staff work in a diligent and dedicated manner to motivate learners; they provide a creative, interesting programme of learning.
- The breadth of continuing professional development (CPD) undertaken by staff is commended.
- Inclusive supports in learning offered to pupils through station teaching and team-teaching are very good.
- The facilitation and work of the students' council are highly praiseworthy.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Moltar a thuilleadh béime a chur ar chothú scileanna cumarsáide, scilenna scríbhneoireachta agus scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. *Further emphasis should be placed on developing the pupils' communication, listening and writing skills in Irish.*
- Pupils should have better access to information and communication technologies (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum.
- Assessment practices should be developed in the senior classes to give pupils greater responsibility for evaluating their own learning against success criteria.

Findings

1. **The learning achievements of pupils**
    - The overall learning achievements of the pupils are very good. During the evaluation, it was observed that pupils were appropriately motivated and engaged very well in all learning activities. Pupils should have better hands-on access to information and communication technologies (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum; the development and implementation of an e-learning plan would help to support this.
    - Learning outcomes in literacy are very good. Early literacy skills are nurtured carefully and this impacts very positively on pupils' reading abilities. The teaching of poetry is

highly commendable. While the pupils undertake a good range of written activities, the presentation and quality of written work have scope for development in the senior classes.

- Learning outcomes in Mathematics are very good. Problem-solving skills are developed in a structured way and pupils benefit from regular active learning experiences.
- Sa Ghaeilge cé go bhfuil go leor rannta, amhráin, foclóir agus frasaí áirithe ar eolas ag na daltaí, tá scóip le forbartha in úsáid agus labhairt na Gaeilge. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le líofacht ar leith, ach b'fhiú breis aire a dhíríú ar fhorbairt a bhfuaimniú. *While the pupils know a lot of rhymes, songs, various phrases and vocabulary, there is scope for development in the speaking and use of Irish. The majority of the pupils read with good fluency, but additional emphasis should be directed to developing their pronunciation.*
- Learning outcomes in the Visual Arts and Music are very good. Pupils display good knowledge of the programme offered to them in Social Environmental and Scientific Education. Pupils have been involved in the *Heritage in Schools* scheme and the work undertaken as a consequence has supported their skills as historians.
- Pupils with additional and special educational needs are making very good progress in accordance with their abilities.
- In questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that that their child was doing well in school. Most pupils agreed that they were doing well at reading and at Mathematics. There was significant variation in the pupils' responses, however, in respect of the enjoyment of lessons, the use of computers during lessons and participation in group work. This variation in response pattern should prompt discussion and follow-up actions at school level.

2. **Quality of teaching**

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is very good, and some instances of excellent practice were observed. To maximise pupils' learning experiences, teachers' skills and talents in specific areas of the curriculum should be shared further.
- Teachers make effective use of station teaching in the junior classes. Programmes such as *Lift off to Literacy* and *Ready Set Go Maths* are used successfully to support learning. *Aistear,* the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, has been introduced to very good effect. Teachers use ICT effectively to enhance lessons.
- Teaching of literacy and numeracy is very comprehenisve and is supported well through print-rich classroom environments. Sa chleachtas ab fhearr i múineadh na Gaeilge a bhreathnaíodh, bhí an teanga in úsaid le linn an cheachta le líofacht. Moltar úsáid na Gaeilge a neartú i ngach rang ionas go bhfuil an teanga ar chluasa na ndaltaí go minic. *Where best pratice was observed in the teaching of Irish, the language was used fluently throughout the lesson. It is recommended that the use of Irish is increased in every classroom so that the language is heard frequently by pupils.*
- Assessment of learning is very good in some classrooms. In most classrooms, teachers place emphasis on the presentation of copybooks and ensure that they are appropriately corrected and monitored. Assessment practices should be developed in the senior classes to give pupils greater responsibility for evaluating their own learning against success criteria. Written feedback by teachers in copybooks should have a more formative purpose, indicating what pupils need to do to improve. It is evident that the quality of self-assessment folders are improving in all classrooms as the pupils are encouraged to reflect more on their learning.
- Teachers prepare comprehensively for their work. Short-term planning is currently provided on a monthly basis; this should be reviewed to comply with rule 126 of the *Rules for National Schools*.
- In questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that teaching is good in the school. The majority of pupils agreed that their teacher explans things clearly, listens to them, and pays attention to what they say.
- The quality of teaching provided for pupils in receipt of learning support is very good. Comprehensive records are maintained. Early intervention work in the junior classes

is highly commended. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Classroom-support plans are in place and there is commitment to providing necessary interventions in an inclusive way. The skill set of all support staff is maximised.

3. **Support for pupils' well-being**

- The management of pupils is very good overall. The pupils' holistic development is promoted through involvement in a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The facilitation and work of the students' council are highly praiseworthy.
- In questionnaire responses, all pupils agreed that if someone is bullying them they could get help from a teacher or another adult in the school. Most agreed that they get on well with the other children and feel safe in the class and in the playground. The use of circle time in Social Personal and Health Education is recommended as a means to support reflection on any issues of importance to pupils.
- Parents strongly endorse the work of the school. In questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that their child enjoys school, discipline is good and parents are welcome in 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.*

4. **Leadership and Management**

- The work of the board of management is very effective. All members have received training and their wide skill set positively supports the work of the school. The board's focus is on supporting teaching and learning and, commendably, its priorities are clearly laid out in a three-year action plan. School management reported that it receives excellent support from the parents' association.
- The in-school management team comprises the principal, deputy principal and one teacher with a post of responsibility. The team members are deeply committed to the school and to the pursuit of high standards in learning.
- The progressive instructional leadership provided by the principal is highly praiseworthy. She works in an enthusiastic manner and has overseen the introduction of a wide variety of new methodologies and programmes. These have had a very positive impact on learning standards. The principal fosters very good relationships within the school community.
- The work of the deputy principal is very good. Her management of learning support and her care of pupils presenting with additional and special educational needs are praiseworthy. The contribution of the special duties post holder to the development of numeracy across the school is particularly commended.
- Ancillary staff, including the secretary, special-needs assistants and cleaning staff, contribute very positively to the work of the school.
- Home-school communication is very good. End-of-year reports to parents are informative and ICT is used very well to communicate with the school community.
- The parents' association (PA) works very hard to support the school through regular fundraising activities. The PA should consider affiliation to the National Parents' Council (Primary).

5. **School Self-evaluation**

- The school has engaged very positively in the process of school self-evaluation in literacy and numeracy. A comprehensive school improvement plan has been formulated, taking parent and pupils' perspectives into consideration. The implementation of this plan has been very good to date.

Conclusion

The school's capacity to engage in continuous school improvement is very good given the vision of the principal, the teamwork in evidence among the staff and their collective dedication to the pupils in their care.

Published October 2015

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M of St Brigid's N.S. welcome the positivity of the report and the affirmation of the teaching standards being implemented in our school. We are pleased that the main strengths of the work of the school were identified. We also welcome advice and recommendtions for future implementations as well as the affirmation of best practices already in existence in our school. The B.O.M. would like to commend the commitment and enthusiasm of our teachers, SNA's, ancillary staff, pupils and the valuable support of our parents and wider community.

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 B.O.M. acknowledges the recommendations of the report, and in keeping with our well established culture of self evaluation and continuous improvement, have incorporated these recommendations into our 3 year school development plan and will endeavour to address them.