

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Stanhope St. Convent NS
Dublin 7
Uimhir rolla: 09932B

Date of inspection: 31 January 2013



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

1. Introduction

Stanhope Street Convent NS is located in Dublin 7 and caters for boys and girls from junior infants to first class and for girls from second to sixth class. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and under the trusteeship of the Religious Sisters of Charity. The school is included in Band 1 of the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Currently there are 337 pupils enrolled. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in thirteen mainstream class settings and eight support teaching settings. 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 effectively to promote the ethos of the school and performs its duties in a purposeful and collaborative manner.
- The principal and in-school management team display a strong commitment to the pupils and staff. As well as conducting the efficient operation of the school, the team plays a commendable role in supporting teaching and learning.
- The ethos of the school is reflected in the respectful and caring manner in which all members of the school community are treated.
- The rapport that has been established with pupils and the quality of communication and contact with parents are highly commended.
- The emphasis on early intervention to support literacy and numeracy is a strong feature of support provided for pupils.
- The levels of co-operation and collaboration among teachers contribute to an effective team approach throughout the school.
- Commendable provision is made for the teaching of English and Mathematics in the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that approaches to classroom planning are reviewed at a whole-school level. The examples of very commendable practice observed during the evaluation should inform whole-school practice going forward.
- It is recommended that the format for monthly progress records is revised in order to provide a clear and succinct account of the learning activities completed by pupils.
- It is recommended that the good start that has been made in the school plan for Irish is built upon to show continuity and progression in each curriculum strand from class to class.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management works effectively to promote the ethos of the school and performs its duties in a purposeful and collaborative manner. The board is properly constituted and meets regularly. It plays an active role in the development of school policy. Detailed reports are presented at each meeting and minutes are kept. School accounts are managed prudently and are certified annually. The ethos of the school is reflected in the respectful and caring manner in which all members of the school community are treated.
- The principal and in-school management team display a strong commitment to the pupils and staff of the school. As well as conducting the efficient operation of the school, the team plays a commendable role in supporting teaching and learning. Official school records are maintained in an exemplary manner. The in-school management team performs a wide range of administrative, pastoral and curriculum duties effectively.
- The management of resources is very good. The board of management and trustees play a lead role in the maintenance and development of the school. The range of resources provided throughout the school to support teaching and learning is of high quality.
- The rapport that has been established with pupils and the quality of communication and contact with parents is highly commended. Management of pupils is excellent and they are treated in a respectful and encouraging manner. They respond well to their teachers and they interact in a positive manner with each other.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. The plans provide appropriate guidance and advice to teachers in a range of administrative and curriculum areas. The school's participation in Band 1 of the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS) has led to the development of very good planning practice in respect of the areas targeted under the programme. It is recommended that this good practice is extended to other areas of curriculum planning in particular. It is recommended that the good start that has been made in the school plan for Irish is built upon on to show continuity and progression in each curriculum strand from class to class.
- The quality of classroom planning is varied, ranging from very good to fair. Where it is most effective, long-term planning is used to inform short-term plans. These in turn contain specific learning objectives and some detail of proposed learning activities for the relevant curriculum area, along with information on how learning is to be assessed and recorded. Where such detail is absent from short-term planning, the planning is of more limited use.
- It is recommended that approaches to classroom planning are reviewed at a whole-school level. The examples of very commendable practice observed during the evaluation should inform whole-school practice going forward. An alternative to the checklist format for monthly progress records should be considered, in order to allow for the recording of details of adjustments to the plans.
- 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

- Ar an iomlán tá teagasc agus foghlaim sa Ghaeilge go maith ach tá scóip le haghaidh forbartha i ngnéithe an tsoláthair. Sonraítear Gaeilge á úsáid go neamhfhoirmiúil i bhformhór na ranganna. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge go héifeachtach mar theanga bhainistíochta ranga sa chuid is mó de na ranganna agus is léir go bhfuil caighdeán Gaeilge na n-oidí féin go maith sa chuid is mó de na ranganna. Glacann na daltaí páirt fhonnmhar sna ceachtanna. Baintear úsáid chruthaitheach as fearas, úsáid na teicneolaíochta san áireamh. I ranganna áirithe tá cinnteacht agus leithne le sonrú sa chlár. Dírítear aird chuí ar chothú scileanna na héisteachta agus na labhartha. Sna ranganna seo, bíonn deiseanna ag na daltaí cumarsáid a dhéanamh bunaithe ar na téamaí faoi chaibidil. Baintear dea-úsáid as an bhfilíocht agus as amhráin chun eispéireas teanga na ndaltaí a shaibhriú i roinnt ranganna. B'fhiú an cleachtas seo a leathnú sa scoil. Ó thaobh na scríbhneoireachta de, déanann na daltaí cleachtaí sna leabhair shaothair agus tá saorscríbhneoireacht go maith i gcorr ranganna. B'fhiú deiseanna níos rialta agus níos struchtúrtha a sholáthar scríbhneoireacht a dhéanamh ar théamaí a mbíonn suim ag na daltaí iontu. B'fhiú freisin saothair na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a chéiliúradh sna taispeántais ranga tríd an scoil. D'fhéadfaí smaoinemh sa bhreis a dhéanamh ar mheasúnú sa Ghaeilge tríd an scoil chun dul chun cinn na ndaltaí a mheas thar na snáitheanna curaclaim uile. *In general teaching and learning in Irish is good but there is scope for development in aspects of the provision. It is noted that Irish is used informally in most classrooms. Irish is used effectively as a language for classroom management and it is clear that the standard of the teachers' own Irish is good in most of the classrooms. Pupils play a willing part in lessons. Creative use is made of resources, including technology. In certain classrooms there is certainty and breadth evident in the programme. Appropriate attention is paid to developing listening and speaking skills. In these classes, pupils have opportunities to communicate based on themes under discussion. Good use is made of poetry and song to enrich pupils' language experience in some classrooms. It would be worthwhile to extend this practice throughout the school. Regarding writing, pupils complete exercises from workbooks and free writing is good in a few classrooms. It would be worthwhile to provide them with more regular and structured opportunities to write on themes of interest to them. It would also be worthwhile to celebrate pupils' work in Irish in displays throughout the school. More thought could be given to assessment in Irish throughout the school in order to assess pupils' progress across all curriculum strands.*
- The teaching of English is commendable. Most pupils attend well during lessons and through the effective use of pair work and small group activities, high levels of engagement are facilitated. Very good resources are provided and used effectively to support the teaching of literacy. Effective teaching methods are used in the teaching of reading. Pupils' attainment in literacy is improving as a result of targeted interventions, and attainment levels in reading are commendable. A whole-school plan for language should be developed, outlining how the scope and sequence of learning is extended as pupils progress through the school. The *Aistear* framework could be used in junior classrooms to enrich vocabulary. There is a good emphasis on using poetry to enrich pupils' language across the school and pupils display a keen interest in learning and reciting a range of poems. Classrooms are print rich learning environments and displays throughout the school are stimulating and attractive. It is recommended that, as the Primary School Curriculum recommends, the formal teaching of grammar is reorganized. Pupils' knowledge of the conventions of grammar should be developed in the context of their general language development. Through the use of a whole-school programme the pupils have opportunities to write in a wide variety of genres and contexts. Pupils' writing is strongly encouraged and celebrated throughout the school. However, the quality of

pupils' handwriting is quite varied and there is a need for more direct intervention in order to ensure that handwriting skills are developed appropriately.

- Very good resources are provided for the teaching of Mathematics. Lesson delivery is systematic and engaging and teachers' questioning is good. Early intervention and team teaching are working well to support pupils' acquisition of number concepts. The high level of pupil engagement in collaborative learning activities is a commendable feature of lessons. Good emphasis is placed on the use of the environment and the application of mathematics concepts to real-life situations. These approaches aid the development of pupils' problem-solving abilities. Knowledge of tables and number facts is very good overall. Pupils' attainment levels in Mathematics are generally good. In some classes their work in Mathematics is incorporated very effectively into classroom displays. In some classes there is scope for greater alignment between long term and short term planning to ensure breadth and balance across curriculum strands and strand units. While linkage across the strands is a deliberate-feature of practice in some classrooms this needs to be extended to all. Pupils are streamed for the teaching of Mathematics. This practice should be kept under constant review so that learning activities are differentiated appropriately in order to accommodate the differing learning needs of pupils within the streams.
- There is scope for development in the teaching of History. Whole-school planning for History makes reference to curriculum strands and strand units and curriculum objectives. However these objectives need to be stated explicitly for each class level. Text books guide the scope and sequence of the programme to a very great extent. The curriculum should become the main source and guide for the school's history programme, which should incorporate a balance between content and skills. In some classes History is linked effectively with other curricular areas, most notably with English and Drama. Resources and station activities are used to stimulate pupil interest. Limited use of project work is evident, however. In the senior classes there is good emphasis on local history. Timelines are evident and are used effectively in some instances. The use of a history trail is commended and should become part of a whole-school approach to the teaching of history. In some lessons observed, pupils were enabled to work collaboratively. Subject interest centres were evident in some classes. There is a lack of consistent assessment practice in History. There should be a dedicated copy or scrapbook for History, in order to show how pupils' learning experiences in this area are developing throughout the school year.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good, although some opportunities for development exist. All teachers engage in a very affirming manner with the pupils. Consequently, pupils' interest in lessons is high and they are highly motivated to complete assigned learning tasks. Classroom management skills are well developed in all settings. The school has devised an effective behaviour management system and it works very well to promote good discipline. It also facilitates frequent and positive contact between home and school. Many lessons evaluated were well structured and featured a variety of stimulating learning activities. Much commendable use is made of group work and this is managed very effectively. Resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Collaborative teaching is used in a variety of contexts to provide focused and structured support to pupils in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well-coordinated throughout the school. A range of screening and diagnostic assessment is used effectively to select pupils for support in literacy and numeracy. A judicious blend of withdrawal and in-class support is used. The school's emphasis on providing early intervention for pupils at risk of

developing learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy is highly commended. The school is very willing to try new initiatives and engages well with outside agencies including the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and with educational charities. Both Maths Recovery and Reading Recovery are undertaken in an efficient manner.

- Teacher-pupil interactions are very affirming. Team teaching is a commendable feature of practice, and collaboration with mainstream teachers is very good. Good use is made of resources. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is used well in some settings to support pupils' learning. It is welcome that support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is being delivered in mainstream settings. It is recommended that pupils for whom English is an additional language are withdrawn from the mainstream class setting only where it is deemed to be necessary. The quality of teachers' planning is somewhat varied and there is scope for more specific delineation of learning targets in some instances. It is advised that opportunities for staff to undertake accredited study in special education should be facilitated where feasible.
- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Parents are gainfully consulted and regular feedback provided on their children's progress. Care for pupils is very good in the school and the care teams meet regularly to discuss provision for pupils. A Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) teacher ensures that a comprehensive range of supports is provided for pupils and their families. Participation levels by parents in activities organised through the HSCL scheme are good.

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 of Stanhope Street Convent Primary School would like to thank the Department of Education & Skills Team of Inspectors for the professional way in which the WSE was carried out and for the courtesy, respect and advice given to the Board and Staff during the WSE.

The Board is very encouraged that the Inspectors found a welcoming, positive and affirming atmosphere, where there is great commitment to provide a high standard of education for the pupils.

We thank the Inspectors for noting many aspects of good practice currently in place and for the contribution of teachers, pupils, parents and school community to an effective learning environment.

The Board, Teaching Staff and Trustees are pleased that the following areas of the school were praised and complimented:

- The Board of Management works effectively to promote the ethos of the school.
- The Principal and In-School Management Team display a strong commitment to the pupils and staff.
- The levels of co-operation and collaboration among teachers contribute to an effective team approach throughout the school.
- The emphasis on early intervention in the areas of literacy and numeracy is a strong feature of support for pupils and commendable provision is made for the teaching of English and Mathematics in the school.
- The rapport with pupils and quality of communication and contact with parents is highly commendable.

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

1 Planning

New templates for monthly reports have been adopted by the staff. Details of work covered, teaching methodologies and learning outcomes will be included in the reports.

Yearly plans to be more specific and used to inform short term plans.

DEIS Planning/Targets to be applied to other curricular areas as we develop our SSE process.

2 Subject Areas

Gaeilge

Focus on oral language following First Steps Approach for English.

Promotion of spoken Irish: "Aoine na Gaeilge" gach seachtain.

Gaelgeoir na Seachtaine Trophy

English

Grammar to be taught in context, for example, paragraph/poem of familiar text to be used for the teaching of grammar.

Handwriting - promotion of best practice by teachers modelling examples of handwriting on posters, labels etc.

Monthly handwriting awards for pupils.

History

Yearly plans to be reviewed in 2014 in line with the curriculum.

Plan of action to include more project work visibly displayed in classrooms and corridors.

A specific scrapbook/copy to be used for History.

Timelines to be referred to regularly in the teaching of History.