

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

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

**All Saints NS**  
**Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock**  
**County Dublin**  
**Uimhir rolla: 10494K**

**Date of inspection: 28 September 2010**



## 1. Introduction

All Saints NS is a co educational primary school under Church of Ireland patronage, employing four full-time teachers and one part-time Learning Support/Resource Teacher (LS/RT). While the school site is restricted and the school building is small, a warm, supportive and bright learning environment is provided for the 43 pupils enrolled whose attendance is excellent. School management is concerned about the trend of declining enrolments in recent years. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- A strong sense of community is evident, reflected in the nurturing and caring atmosphere and the ongoing involvement of parents in the life of the school.
- The school is managed effectively by the board of management and the principal.
- Overall achievement levels in reading and mathematics are very good.
- Very good support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. High quality teaching takes place in the special education needs settings and pupil progress is very good.
- The school building is excellently maintained and provides an attractive, supportive and safe learning environment for the pupils.
- The pupils in general are enthusiastic and motivated learners who are well mannered and very well behaved and like coming to school.
- Good communication links are fostered between home and school and policies and practices are clearly stated and effectively communicated.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Whole-school curriculum plans and individual classroom planning should be adapted to reflect differentiated programmes of learning that will more effectively meet the varying ability levels of the pupils.
- Because the quality of teaching varies considerably in the school, the principal and management should continue to address weaknesses in teaching at infant level.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very committed to the school and carries out its duties in an effective manner. It is recommended that the board produces an annual report on the operation and performance of the school.

- The principal is diligent and hardworking and is commended on the establishment of an effective range of school structures and procedures. She has taken a lead role in the school planning process and has identified a number of priorities for development. She is ably assisted by the Deputy Principal who carries out her assigned duties conscientiously. These duties however, do not reflect the current priorities of the school and as such should be reviewed in accordance with the DES Circular 07/03.
- Learning support and resource teachers are currently deployed for significant periods during each school day to support the teaching of reading at infant level. While this situation reflects an immediate teaching and learning priority, it is not the most appropriate structure to meet the learning needs of all pupils in the longer term. Nonetheless, the efforts undertaken to date by the principal and board of management to address poor quality teaching are noted.
- Learning environments are very attractive, stimulating and well resourced.
- Pupils overall are very well managed, are treated with respect and a positive and supportive approach is taken to discipline and behaviour. The pupils are very well behaved, are courteous and considerate of others. They adhere to the class and school rules and speak with pride about their school.
- The parent body is very happy with the progress their children are making and with the communication between school and home.

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

- The principal has taken a lead role in the planning process and it is very well co-ordinated and managed. Comprehensive organisational plans have been developed collaboratively. Most of the curriculum plans have also been completed. These provide a general overview of the content to be covered and some guidelines on the teaching approaches to be used. It is recommended that these plans are adapted to reflect the specific ability levels and needs of the pupils, agreed approaches to the teaching of particular aspects of curricular areas and appropriate provision for differentiation. A common template for individual teacher planning and for the recording of monthly progress has been agreed. While good efforts are being made to complete this template comprehensively, it is recommended that all teachers should provide clear learning objectives and make explicit provision for differentiation in their individual planning.

#### **Child protection policy and procedures**

School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

#### **5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement**

- Léiríonn na daltaí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge. Úsáideann na múinteoirí go léir an Ghaeilge mar theanga theagaisc sna ceachtanna. Tá éagsúlacht ag baint le

caighdeán na múinteoireachta agus foghlamtha. I bhformhór na ranganna, bíonn fócas agus struchtúr sna ceachtanna agus tugtar deiseanna do na daltaí an teanga a chleachtadh trí chluichí agus obair bheirte. Sna ranganna sin tá stór focal leathan ag na daltaí, tá siad in ann ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt agus páirt a ghlacadh i ngníomhaíochtaí scríbhneoireachta simplí agus tá ar a gcumas na téascleabhair a léamh. Ba chóir clár na ranganna naíonáin a bhunú ar fhoghlaim na foclóra agus ar éisteacht agus labhairt na teanga. Moltar béim faoi leith a chur ar dhaingniú agus ar leanúnachas sa chlár Ghaeilge tríd an scoil.

*Pupils display a positive attitude towards Irish. All teachers use Irish as the means of communication when teaching the language. The standard of teaching and learning in Irish varies. Lessons in most classes are focused and well structured and provide opportunities for pupils to practise the language learned through games and pair work. In these classes pupils have a good vocabulary, can ask and answer questions, can engage in simple personal writing activities and can read the class text books. It is essential that the programme in the infant classes is based on developing an appropriate vocabulary and on listening to and speaking the language. It is recommended that emphasis is placed on consolidation and continuity in the Irish programme through the school.*

- According to standardised test results, pupils' overall achievement in English reading is very good. A positive attitude towards reading is fostered and each class has a very good class library. The quality of the teaching of reading varies through the school. The input of learning support and resource teaching at infant level is ensuring that a structured phonological awareness programme and some explicit literacy skills are being taught. It is essential that pupils at this level be equipped with a broader range of word attack skills to enable them to read independently and to read for pleasure. Reading materials in the middle classes and senior classes needs to be further differentiated to meet individual learning needs. Pupils are generally articulate and have a wide ranging vocabulary. Some good examples of personal writing were noted during the evaluation. It is essential that pupils are enabled to engage in more challenging creative writing activities in a wider variety of genres. The standard of handwriting is very good and pupils' written work is affirmed and regularly corrected.
- Pupils' overall achievement in Mathematics is very good. Mental Mathematics is taught at the beginning of all lessons. In the middle and senior classes, lessons are well structured, concepts are clearly explained (as endorsed by the pupils in the pupil questionnaire) and concrete materials are used as appropriate. The key priority in these classes is to maintain the interest level of the more able pupils and to challenge them appropriately. This will require group teaching of concepts at varying levels. Mathematics lessons at the infant level are poorly structured and are not informed by explicit learning objectives. Pupils are given unchallenging activities and interest levels are not maintained.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in drama is very good. In the majority of classes, pupils are given opportunities to engage in the process of drama using a range of drama techniques. Very good levels of participation by the pupils were noted and good links were evident between drama lessons and topics and themes in other curricular areas.
- The interactive whiteboard is used very effectively by some of the teachers to support teaching and learning. While a variety of assessment tools is used to monitor pupil progress, it would be particularly helpful for teachers to track individual pupil progress as they engage in programme planning in English and Mathematics. Just over half the pupils responded in the questionnaire that their lessons are interesting and that they enjoy their lessons and learning. Consideration should be given to the further adaptation of lessons,

to a reduction in teacher-directed whole class teaching and to placing more emphasis on collaborative and co-operative activities.

## **6. Quality of Supports for Pupils**

- A range of screening approaches, combined with teacher observation, is used to identify pupils in need of additional learning support. Comprehensive Individual Education Plans and group plans clearly outline the long and short-term targets to be achieved. As part of current school practice, the resource teacher withdraws individual class groupings for aspects of the English curriculum to support class teachers at both the middle and senior levels in the school.
- A combination of both in-class and withdrawal approaches is used. Support teachers relate very well to the pupils and every encouragement is given to them to succeed and to reach their individual potential. Very good teaching approaches are in use and very good processes for monitoring and recording progress are in place. Individual pupils are making good progress. The Special Needs Assistant works in a committed and caring manner with the individual pupil in her care and is very clear about her role and responsibilities.
- It is recommended that further diagnostic testing be employed in the support settings to determine individual pupil needs. It is recommended that clear guidelines on the role of the learning support and resource teachers are provided in the Special Education Needs policy including how they support differentiated learning programmes in individual classes. It is also essential that the written policy reflects the practices in the school and the school's named priorities.

*Published April 2011*

# Appendix

## School response to the report

### Submitted by the Board of Management

#### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

- We are pleased that the report acknowledged the school is well managed. Indeed 100% of the parents surveyed agreed with this statement. We would like to thank the Principal and Deputy Principal for all their hard work.
- The Board of Management is pleased to announce a significant increase in our school enrolment.
- The school building is excellently maintained. We are grateful to the Parents' Association for the provision of funding for resources not provided by the Department of education and Skills.
- We are pleased that the report highlighted the positive attitude towards Irish. The school is involved in research in the teaching of Irish for the National Council for Curriculum Assessment.
- We agree wholeheartedly that the pupils are "enthusiastic and motivated learners who are well mannered and very well behaved and like coming to 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**

- Since the school inspection the duties of the Deputy Principal have been reviewed in accordance with DES Circular 07/03.
- The Board of Management propose to present an annual report at the Parents' Association AGM each autumn.
- We note that the report acknowledged the efforts undertaken to date by the Principal and Board of Management to address weaknesses at Infant level. We continue to endeavour to improve this situation.
- Curricular plans are reviewed and revised annually by each teacher. We will continue to endeavour to further highlight effective differentiation in our plans.
- Our school has many strengths and we aim to achieve the recommendations outlined.