

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Laurence O'Toole's
Junior Boys' National School,
Seville Place, Dublin 1**

Uimhir rolla: 11776C

Date of inspection: 25 November 2010



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

1. Introduction

St. Laurence O'Toole's Junior Boys' National School is located in Seville Place, Dublin 1. It caters for boys from infants to first class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Currently, there are sixty pupils in the school. 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. 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:

- There is a warm, caring atmosphere in the school and close collaboration with community groups and with state agencies active in the locality.
- There is a professional, concerted approach to planning and setting learning targets.
- The principal and teachers are committed to providing a rich educational experience for pupils with commendable emphasis on improving standards in literacy and numeracy.
- The board of management carries out its work in an effective manner.
- Initiatives such as *Reading Recovery* and *Maths Recovery* have been used successfully to enhance pupils' achievements in English and Mathematics.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school should promote even greater in-class involvement of parents, particularly at infants' level.
- It is recommended that age-based norms rather than class-based norms be used when analysing standardised tests results.
- The school's enrolment policy should be reviewed.
- The provision of the preparatory infant year should be reviewed by the board in the light of the contents of Circulars 11/01, 24/02 and 32/03, and the parameters surrounding the allocation of resources to the school under the DEIS programme.
- The school should review the role of the shared support teacher to ensure that there is a greater focus on the teacher's in-class involvement, particularly in infants' classes, to promote language and cognitive development.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is constituted properly, meets regularly and manages the organisation and operation of the school in an effective manner. The board plays an appropriate role in the school planning process. Detailed minutes of meetings are kept and financial accounts are managed carefully. Very good mechanisms are in place for communicating and collaborating with community groups and state agencies in the locality.
- It is recommended that the board should review paragraph ten of the school's enrolment policy to ensure that it meets all legal requirements and that it is in agreement with other paragraphs of the policy.
- In 1999, the Department provided resources to allow the school to establish, on a temporary basis, a preparatory infant class which preceded the normal two-year infant

cycle. It is recommended that the provision of the preparatory infant year be reviewed by the board in the light of the contents of Circulars 11/01, 24/02 and 32/03, and the parameters surrounding the allocation of resources to the school under the DEIS programme.

- The school dates from c.1880. As part of a scheme to re-develop the docklands area of the inner city, a new school building was to be provided with substantial funding coming from the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA). However, it was announced recently that funding will not now be provided and the board is currently completing an application to the Department of Education and Skills to refurbish the existing school building.
- A good stock of teaching and learning resources has been built up with support from the local community. Resources are managed and maintained appropriately.
- Pupils respond positively to the warm, supportive atmosphere in the school and all classroom exchanges occur in a pleasant, affirming manner.
- Pupils' attendance is carefully monitored and rates of attendance are good.
- The principal and members of the in-school management team work in a united, cohesive manner to oversee the work of the school. Duties are appropriately assigned to post holders and reflect the needs of the school. Post holders report on their areas of responsibility at staff meetings and submit annual reports to the board of management. In addition, the principal provides a comprehensive report on the operation of the school to the board each year.
- Relations with the local community are very good. Parents are encouraged to become involved in initiatives such as *Maths for Fun*, *Science for Fun* and *Zoom Ahead With Books*. Written reports are provided to parents each year and formal parent-teacher meetings are held annually. The results of questionnaires indicate that parents are very satisfied with the work of the school and that it is held in high esteem in the community.
- It is recommended that the practice of pupils being given soup during tuition time at the start of the day, in addition to participating in the breakfast club, be reviewed.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- As required under the DEIS programme, the school has devised a three-year action plan. The targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy aim to reduce the overall numbers of pupils achieving below the twentieth percentile and to increase the numbers achieving above the fortieth percentile. It is recommended that age-based norms rather than class-based norms be used when analysing standardised test results and setting targets.
- The quality of whole-school planning is good. In addition to a plan for the organisation and operation of the school, a plan for all curriculum areas has been devised. All members of the school community were involved in drawing up the plan and it has been ratified by the board of management.
- All teachers prepare carefully for their work and provide written long-term and short-term plans. A range of suitable resources to illustrate concepts and scaffold pupils' learning is also provided and managed appropriately. Teachers' monthly progress records are carefully maintained by the principal. It is recommended that class timetables be reviewed to ensure closer alignment with the allocation of time in the Primary School

Curriculum. Additionally, it is recommended that teachers should specify learning objectives, especially in literacy and numeracy, in their short-term plans.

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

- Tá béim sa phlean scoile ar mheas agus ar shuim na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a chothú agus a threisiú de réir mar a théann siad tríd an scoil. Múineann gach oide an Ghaeilge ar bhonn taitneamhach, sásúil agus is léir go bhfuil foclóir agus stór frásanna na ndaltaí á bhforbairt diaidh ar ndiaidh. Tugtar deiseanna rialta do dhaltaí páirt a ghlacadh i gcluichí teanga, drámaíocht, scéalaíocht agus rólímirt. Spreagtar iad go luath chun caint leanúnach a chleachtadh agus nathanna simplí a úsáid. Cuirtear ar chumas daltaí réimse cuí foclóra a thuiscint. Baintear leas cruthaitheach as fótagrafaíocht dhigiteach agus an bord bán idirghníomhach chun suim a mhúscailt agus foclóir a leathnú. B'fhiú cur leis an raon gníomhaíochtaí a soláthraítear agus leis an úsáid a bhaintear as acmhainní chun deiseanna níos rialta a thabhairt do dhaltaí an teanga a úsáid i suímh chumarsáideacha.
- *The school plan emphasises the importance of cultivating pupils' love and interest in Irish as they progress through the school. All teachers teach Irish in a satisfactory, enjoyable way and it is apparent that pupils' vocabulary and language is developing in a step-by-step manner. Opportunities are regularly provided to pupils to take part in language games, drama, story telling and role play. Pupils are encouraged from an early stage to use full sentences and to practise using simple expressions. Pupils are enabled to understand a suitable range of vocabulary. Digital photography is used creatively with the interactive white board to stimulate interest and to broaden vocabulary. It is recommended that the range of language activities be increased and that wider use be made of available resources to allow pupils to use the language in communicative settings.*
- The school plan for English recognises the importance of developing all aspects of children's literacy and suitable strategies have been devised to enhance oral, reading and writing skills. A wide range of stimulating reading material has been acquired and careful attention is paid to pre-writing and early writing activities.
- A play hour is used at infants' level to promote language development. The *Zoom Ahead With Books* scheme, whereby children and their parents read, discuss, write or draw about stories they have read together, is a creative and innovative way of involving parents in their children's language development. The *Reading Recovery* programme has been used successfully with commendable progress being made by pupils. Some of the core principles of the *Reading Recovery* programme, particularly those relating to reading new and familiar books, have been incorporated into the school's *Hour of Power* where pupils engage with at least four adults to develop their reading and writing skills. Successful links have been established with local commercial organisations and third-level institutions to promote literacy in the school. Good provision for differentiation was seen during the inspection with learning programmes adjusted to accommodate individual differences.

- Detailed reading records are maintained for each pupil. Some checklists are also kept which indicate learning targets achieved. It is recommended that the date particular targets are achieved be recorded in order to enable teachers to track pupils' rates of progress.
- In order to develop the work further, it is recommended that strategies be devised to encourage parents to become involved, on a rota basis, in the *Hour of Power*. It is also recommended that the school should not teach elements of formal grammar during the *Hour of Power*.
- The school places due emphasis on the development of pupils' understanding and language during Mathematics lessons. An appropriate range of resources has been acquired and commendable use is made of mathematical equipment to engage pupils' interest and to promote understanding of number and basic mathematical concepts. Teachers monitor pupils' attainment levels and judiciously record outcomes.
- A good whole-school plan for Science is in place. A wide range of equipment is used and pupils are enabled to have hands-on experience of conducting simple science experiments. The language associated with Science and a full understanding of scientific concepts can be a challenge for many children. Therefore, in the next review of the science plan, it is recommended that the school should set out how it aims to teach specific terminology. It is also recommended that a stronger play-based approach be deployed to teaching Science, particularly at infants' level.
- In the four curriculum areas evaluated, the quality of teaching and learning was seen to be good with all teachers anxious to promote the full and harmonious development of pupils and to provide interesting learning activities. Lessons were purposeful and well structured and classrooms were prepared carefully as stimulating learning environments. Support teachers and class teachers co-operate willingly to ensure that a cohesive learning programme is provided to all pupils. Learning activities are appropriately differentiated and pupils are set learning tasks commensurate with their levels of readiness and ability.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- Support for pupils with special educational needs is provided in accordance with the school's policy, which was formulated collaboratively by the teaching staff, board of management and parents. Pupils are selected for support through the use of appropriate screening tests. Support is provided by withdrawing pupils from mainstream classes and through well-structured in-class support in literacy. A support teacher is shared with the senior boys' school. The school should review the role of the shared support teacher to ensure that there is a greater focus on the teacher's in-class involvement, particularly in infants' classes, to promote language and cognitive development.
- A Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator is shared with two neighbouring schools. A comprehensive range of supports for parents and pupils is organised under the scheme. Very good links have been established with state agencies and businesses in the locality to co-ordinate the provision of educational supports in the community. A breakfast club is funded through the School Completion Programme. Courses for parents are organised regularly on a variety of topics. The use of questionnaires to elicit parents' feedback on the effectiveness of courses is a very commendable feature of the work.

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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, Principal and teachers of St. Laurence O'Toole's Junior Boys school would like to thank the Inspectors for acknowledging the following points:

- ❖ That the school promotes the full and harmonious development of pupils and provides a rich educational experience for them.
- ❖ That there is a warm caring atmosphere in the school, and comments on the professionalism and commitment of the teaching staff.
- ❖ That there is a professional concerted approach to planning and setting learning targets.
- ❖ That the inspectors find commendable the emphasis on improving standards on literacy and numeracy – using our Literacy Hour based on Reading Recovery Methodology and Maths Recovery.
- ❖ That our Zoom Ahead with Books Project is a creative and innovative way of involving parents in their children's language development as are our other initiatives to promote parental involvement e.g. Maths for Fun and Science for Fun.
- ❖ That we are extremely pleased with, and encourage by, the result of our Parents' questionnaire which indicates that the parents are very happy with the work of the school and that it is held in such high esteem within the 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

We have taken the inspectorates recommendations onboard, and the recommendations including our Enrolment Policy and work of the Support Teacher are currently under review.