

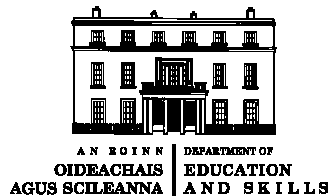
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Marymount National School,
The Rower, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla: 15160G**

Date of inspection: 02 October 2013



1. Introduction

Marymount NS is a seven-teacher, co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. The current enrolment of 165 pupils represents a steady increase in recent years. Attendance levels in the school are very good. 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 school plays a central role in the local area and enjoys the regard and support of the local community.
- The board of management is committed to ensuring that a high quality education is provided for all pupils.
- The principal and staff are a very diligent, collegial and hard-working team who are committed to bringing the school forward positively and constructively.
- The quality of teaching and learning is of a very high quality, with teachers employing a range of strategies to ensure lessons are engaging and stimulating.
- The pupils' behaviour is very good and they are eager and motivated in their learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The use of the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning should be extended to ensure that the areas of greatest need continue to be prioritised.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets frequently and, as well as overseeing the current building project in the school, it is committed to ensuring that a high quality education is provided for all pupils. The members of the board share willingly their expertise and skills to ensure the efficient management of the school.
- The principal and staff are a very diligent, collegial, hard-working team, who are committed to bringing the school forward positively and constructively. The teaching principal creates a positive harmonious working environment and a culture of shared responsibility. Her dedication and effective organisational skills are reflected in the efficient day-to-day operation of the school. Ongoing developments in teaching and learning are central to her vision.
- The special duties' post-holders carry out their duties thoroughly and contribute to the successful management of the school.
- A modern, spacious well equipped new school building supports teaching and learning in the school. Due to the increased enrolment in recent years, a new classroom is currently

under construction in the school. Classrooms are presented attractively and extensive teaching and learning resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), are used effectively

- The ancillary staff make a significant contribution to the smooth functioning of the school.
- A strong community spirit is maintained through very good relationship and communication structures with parents and with the wider school community. The parents association is very active, enthusiastic in its work and very supportive of school activities. The gardening initiative begun by parents is particularly noteworthy. Responses to parental questionnaires indicate that the school is well run and that parents are happy with the school.
- Pupils are valued members of the school community. They are attentive, responsive, eager and motivated in their learning. Classroom atmospheres are affirmative and pupils' interactions demonstrate high levels of confidence. A range of practices, including the green schools committee and school assemblies, provide opportunities for pupils to be collaboratively involved in school life. In the parental questionnaire responses, all parents report that their children feel safe in school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning is highly commendable. A range of clear organisational policies has been developed collaboratively. Curriculum plans are of a high quality and are successful in delineating content and skills. They impact effectively on provision for pupils and on their learning.
- The school engages productively in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. Recently the school has undertaken the review of literacy and following this review has identified and targeted areas of its work that can be improved. Through the school improvement plan these areas are currently being addressed.
- The quality of teachers' individual classroom planning is good. Teachers produce suitable long-term and short-term schemes of work, and progress records are maintained dutifully.
- 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 quality of teaching and learning is of a high quality with positive levels of pupil achievement in evidence. The teachers employ a range of strategies and are open to embracing new approaches and initiatives. They present well-prepared and stimulating lessons that engage and interest the highly-motivated pupils. All classrooms provide stimulating learning environments which are print and number rich. In the pupil questionnaire responses almost all pupils report that they consider that this is a good school.
- The teachers employ a variety of assessment modes, including teacher-designed tests, checklists and work samples to monitor their pupils' progress. An appropriate range of screening, standardised and diagnostic tests are administered. The analysis of

standardised tests at a whole-school level is praiseworthy and it is now advised that the progress of individual pupils be tracked from year to year. It is also recommended that the use of the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning be extended to ensure that the areas of greatest need continue to be prioritised.

- Tá foireann na scoile le moladh as an sár-iarracht atá á dhéanamh acu chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa scoil. Is tairbheach an leas a bhaineann siad as straitéisí fiúntacha chun cumarsáid na bpáistí a mhéadú agus tá sé ar chumas acu abairtí a chumadh agus cumarsáid chruinn a dhéanamh sa teanga. Glacann na daltaí páirt ghníomhach san fhoghlaim. Ar an iomlán, léann na daltaí le líofacht agus le cruinneas oiriúnach. Faigheann siad deiseanna chun scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus scríbhneoireacht phearsanta a chleachtadh.

The school staff is praised for its great efforts in promoting Irish throughout the school. Effective strategies are utilised to increase communication among pupils and they are capable of structuring sentences and communicating accurately in the language. The pupils participate actively in the learning. On the whole, the pupils read with appropriate fluency and accuracy. They are provided with opportunities to engage in both functional and personal writing.

- Effective practice is in evidence in the teaching and learning of English, with pupils achieving well. The pupils are confident, articulate and reflective oral communicators who demonstrate an admirable breadth of general knowledge. Pupils' response to and appreciation of poetry is actively nurtured. Suitable attention is placed on promoting the pupils' reading skills. As part of the SSE process, the school has identified writing as an area for improvement. A number of actions are currently being implemented to support the development of pupils' independent writing skills and the process approach to writing.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a very high standard. The foundation and development of concepts are ensured with well-considered lessons and the structured use of concrete materials. There is consistent use and development of mathematical language during classroom activities. Commendable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic, the development of number facts and on problem-solving tasks.
- Provision for Geography is very good, with creative and interesting lessons. Learning is integrated well with other curricular areas including Mathematics, English and Visual Arts. Local and national geographical features are explored and there is a clear focus on developing pupils' geographical skills. Environmental awareness and care practices are promoted effectively, including through the *Green Schools* initiative. Effective use is made of ICT to enhance and stimulate pupils' learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- A detailed school policy has been developed in relation to provision for learning support and special educational needs. The teachers work in a highly committed manner and good collaboration with parents, class teachers, special needs assistants, and other professionals and service providers was in evidence.
- Both in-class and withdrawal approaches to providing support to pupils were in evidence. Effective practice was observed in relation to the promotion of literacy, numeracy and the self-management skills of individual and groups of pupils, in both the classroom and learning support settings. A good variety of teaching methodologies is employed and pupils engaged purposefully in the activities and lessons provided.

- The teachers prepare conscientiously and undertake careful planning in relation to the pupils' learning needs. To further develop the school's provision in this area, it is advised that in devising the pupils' individual education plans [IEPs], measurable targets should be identified that can be tracked over time and linked to the assessment process.

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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 is happy with the positive and practical support that both the report and the evaluation have provided our school. We are pleased that the report recognises the work of the whole school community and affirms the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of our pupils, parents, staff and Board of Management. The recognition of the high quality of teaching, learning and support of our pupils is both affirming and encouraging.

We also wish to take this opportunity to thank the entire staff of the school for their hard work and commitment in striving to provide high quality learning opportunities for all our pupils.

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 school is committed to a culture of continuous development and are currently extending and formalising the use of the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning.