

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Vincent's Infant Boys' N S,
North William Street, Dublin 1.
Uimhir rolla: 15816I

Date of inspection: 23 February 2012



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

St Vincent's Infants Boys' School caters for pupils from junior infants to first class. It is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. Current enrolment is 99 pupils. Overall attendance levels are very good. The school is included in Band 1 of the programme *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:

- The school is managed in a very strategic manner by the board of management.
- The quality of planning and school self-evaluation practises is very good.
- The school benefits from the insightful, enthusiastic and dynamic leadership of the principal and in-school management team.
- A very warm and nurturing school climate exists.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning.
- Very good assessment and differentiation practices are in use in the school.
- Pupils are making very good progress in numeracy and literacy.
- Parents are successfully and deliberately involved in the support of pupil learning.
- The curriculum is delivered in a very structured manner. Lessons place strong emphasis on hands-on activities, varied learning experiences and the active involvement of pupils.
- High quality support for pupils with special educational needs is in place.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To further facilitate the revision and development of specific mathematical skills, it is recommended that the school examine possibilities for transferring the key principles of its intensive English language skills programme to the teaching of Mathematics.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed by a reflective, strategic and very dynamic board of management. School accounts are carefully managed. The board's priorities include the strategic management of resources, the development of parental involvement in the life of the school, the support of teaching and learning initiatives and the use of reflective practices at a managerial level which support the development of the pupils' learning experiences in the school.
- The school is led by a very committed and enthusiastic school principal. He is very active in promoting the highest standards of learning and in so doing very successfully encourages and leads school staff in the delivery of a full, rewarding and challenging learning experience for pupils. The principal is ably supported by an in-school management team who are dynamic and focused in their work. Together they provide high quality leadership across pastoral, curricular and organisational domains.
- The school is presented in a very colourful, stimulating and tidy manner. Resources are managed in a very efficient manner. School staff regularly engages in professional development courses. The strategic and purposeful manner in which such learning is shared with other staff members is highly commended.
- The management of pupils is of a high standard. Pupils are affirmed and nurtured by teachers at every opportunity. Strong norms of respect underpin all pupil-teacher interactions. Pupils are very content in this learning environment.
- Very good communication structures are in place. Parents are regularly apprised of school activities through the use of memos, text-a-parent services, the school website and school notices. The school is very active in involving parents in a wide range of school activities. Parent-teacher meetings are held each year and parents are provided with an annual written report on the progress of their children.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school planning is very good. Such planning is informed by the effective and very regular use of self-evaluation practices. A wide range of organisational policies have been compiled which are very clear and practical in nature. Similarly, comprehensive, practical and detailed curricular policies have been written.
- Overall, the quality of teacher planning is very good. All teachers write long and short-term plans which are specific and detailed, providing a clear and progressional outline of content. Very detailed monthly reports are also written.
- 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

- Déantar cúram cuí de mhúineadh na Gaeilge sa scoil. I ngach rang, baintear dea-úsáid as raon leathan fearais oiriúnach chun suim na ndaltaí a spreagadh agus a choinneáil le

linn na gceachtanna. Baintear feidhm thorthúil as teicneolaíocht an eolais chun ceachtanna a chur i láthair na ndaltaí. Múintear raon fairsing rann agus amhrán agus is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh as iad seo a aithris. I ranganna áirithe cuirtear béim inmholta ar insint scéalta gearra agus glacann na daltaí páirt thoilteanach i ndrámáí beaga bunaithe ar na scéalta sin. Imríonn na daltaí cluichí teanga i ngach rang agus cabhraíonn an cleachtas seo leo an Ghaeilge a úsáid. B'fhiú breis béime a chur ar obair bheirte a úsáid i ranganna áirithe chun deiseanna labhartha níos rialta a thabhairt do dhaltaí an teanga a labhairt.

- *Appropriate attention is given to the teaching of Irish in the school. In every class, good use is made of a wide range of appropriate equipment to stimulate pupils and to retain their interest during lessons. Productive use is made of information technology to present lessons to pupils. An extensive range of rhymes and songs is taught and it is clear that pupils enjoy reciting these. In some classes commendable emphasis is placed on the narration of short stories and pupils participate eagerly in little dramas based on these stories. Pupils play language games in each class and this practice helps them use the language. There is scope in some classes for more use of pair work to provide pupils with more regular opportunities to speak the language.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. Resources, hands-on activities and various stimuli are used very effectively. Very structured provision is in place for the development of the pupils' oral language skills. The use of intensive and focused interventions which effectively develop pupils' language skills is commendable. Pupils display a keen interest in reading. A very structured and progressive approach to the development of the pupils' readings skills which empowers parents and which places a strong focus on assessment, differentiated reading programmes and the use of reading recovery techniques has resulted in exemplary pupil progress. Creative and appropriate provision is in place for the development of pupils' writing skills. They write enthusiastically and competently across a range of genres. Pupils capably recite a wide range of poems.
- Pupils are making very good progress in Mathematics and clearly enjoy the subject. A structured programme is in place which places focused and progressional emphasis on the development of mathematical language and concepts. Lessons make very good use of collaborative learning, discussion and hands-on activities. Content is effectively linked to the environment and life experience of pupils and is frequently integrated with other curricular areas. Pupil progress is closely monitored with resulting high quality differentiation practices in place. The school has introduced various commendable interventions to enhance teaching and learning in Mathematics. As these interventions embed themselves in classroom practice, and to further facilitate the revision and development of specific mathematical skills, it is recommended that the school examine possibilities for transferring the key principles of its intensive English language skills programme to Mathematics. Parents are encouraged to become involved in mathematics on a number of levels with the *Maths for Fun* programme being specifically notable.
- High quality provision is in place for the delivery of the Physical Education curriculum. The school is involved in a number of activities to promote Physical Education which include aerobic fitness classes, *Sports for Success* and a daily physical education class as part of break time. Lessons make very good use of warm-up and cool down activities. Resources are used effectively. All pupils engage energetically in structured lessons which make very good provision for the development of specific skills. Pupils are active in exploring, expressing and experimenting during these lessons.
- The quality of teaching and learning in this school is of a high standard. High quality self-evaluation practices coupled with continuous and focused assessment for learning result in teaching approaches which are structured, differentiated and challenging for the pupils.

Lessons have very good pace and structure and place strong emphasis on active and collaborative learning experiences. Pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons. They display pride and interest in their work which is of a very good standard. Data from parent questionnaires indicate that a very high proportion of them think that 'teaching is good in the school' and that their 'child is doing well in school'.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- A very effective range of supports is provided in a well-coordinated and inclusive manner for pupils with special educational needs. The highly collaborative approach adopted in the school ensures that support programmes are linked closely with work in mainstream classrooms. Pupils in need of additional support are identified at an early stage through the use of a highly commendable range of assessment instruments. Focused individual learning programmes are designed for pupils.
- Support is provided through the use of a combination of in-class and withdrawal methods. Appropriate learning activities are designed and pupils participate actively and purposefully in them. Very good resources which include stimulating teacher-designed materials are used very successfully to help pupils engage in support lessons.
- Structured support is in place for pupils who receive support in English as an additional language (EAL). This support is delivered in a lively, interactive and stimulating manner.
- Through its participation in the DEIS Band 1 programme, the school accesses a range of support programmes to offset the effects of educational disadvantage. These supports are used very successfully, and it is evident that they have a measurable and sustained impact on pupil achievement. The school shares the services of a Home School Community Liaison co-ordinator with another local school. A broad range of activities is organised in a focused and effective manner to provide a range of beneficial learning activities for pupils and to assist families in supporting their children's education. The school also benefits from the services of a school completion programme which is very structured in its interventions and approaches.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

On behalf of the whole school community the board of management of St Vincent's Boys' School would like to thank the Inspection Team for their professionalism, courtesy, collaborative approach and the very positive and affirming report on our school.

- We are appreciative of the way in which the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of our teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, pupils and board members has been recognised and affirmed. We especially welcome the praise for the warm school climate where pupils are affirmed and nurtured by teachers at every opportunity and that strong norms of respect underpinning all pupil-teacher interactions were noted. It is important to us that an inclusive and high quality of support for pupils with special educational needs was also reported.
- Equally, we taken pride in the high standard of teaching and learning acknowledged, lessons that place strong emphasis on active and collaborative learning experiences and commendable interventions in Mathematics and Irish. We also appreciate the comments regarding the very positive attitude of our pupils who take pride and interest in their learning.
- The board and principal would particularly like to thank the staff for their excellent preparation and full commitment to collaborative whole-school planning. The report noted structured, differentiated and progressive teaching approaches. It also commended the strategic and purposeful manner in which in-service learning is shared with other staff members.
- It is especially pleasing that parental involvement was evident in a wide range of school activities and that good communication structures were noted. We welcome the comments on our reading programme that empower parents and result in exemplary pupil progress. We are equally pleased that such a high proportion of parents reported that their boys are doing well in the school.
- We particularly welcome the formal acknowledgement that our *Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools* (DEIS) Band 1 supports are used very successfully and that it is evident that they have a measurable and sustained impact on pupils' learning.
- We also appreciate the acknowledgement of the work of our board of management as reflective, strategic and very dynamic.

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 board of management and staff welcome the recommendations and have begun implementing them.