

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St Vincent de Paul Infants School  
Marino, Dublin 9  
Uimhir rolla: 16754R**

**Date of inspection: 12 May 2011**



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

## 1. Introduction

St Vincent de Paul Infants School is a co-educational school which caters for pupils from junior infants to first class. It is located in Marino, Dublin 9 and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school building is shared with the senior girls' school. 332 pupils were enrolled at the time of the evaluation. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream class settings and six 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 operates as an effective, committed and cohesive unit and provides prudent oversight to the operation of the school.
- The principal provides strong, caring and committed leadership and she is assisted by a supportive and dynamic in-school management team.
- The quality and frequency of communication between the school and home is commended.
- Lessons in the curriculum subjects evaluated are well planned and well taught, and a broad range of resources is prepared and used effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is coordinated efficiently and is provided in a caring and well-structured manner.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the board of management review the paragraph in the enrolment policy which refers to the discretion reserved by the board in relation to pupils with special needs and pupils from particular groups.
- To enhance classroom planning, it is recommended that greater reference to proposed teaching methods, learning activities, differentiation and integration be included in short-term plans.
- It is recommended that the system of teacher allocation be reviewed in order to allow pupils to experience the skills, teaching styles and expertise of more than one teacher.
- In the further development of self-review processes in the school, it is recommended that a planning calendar be drawn up to facilitate cyclical review of curriculum and organisational areas.

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The board of management is properly constituted, meets frequently and keeps detailed minutes of meetings. The board of management operates as an effective, committed and cohesive unit and provides prudent and caring management to the school. Board members are cognisant of all aspects of school life and work effectively to provide a secure and comfortable environment for teaching and learning. Specific duties have been assigned to board members and these duties are performed diligently and effectively.
- The principal provides strong, caring and committed leadership to the school community. She is assisted by a supportive and dynamic in-school management team which performs a range of organisational, curriculum and pastoral roles conscientiously.
- Resources are managed well. Careful attention is paid to the appropriate use of finances for the maintenance of the school and the provision of resources for teaching and learning. School accounts are audited annually. The teacher-allocation system in use entails many pupils being assigned to the same teacher for their three years in the school. It is recommended that this system be reviewed in order to allow pupils to experience the skills, teaching styles and expertise of more than one teacher.
- The school promotes regular communication with parents and the enrolment booklet issued to parents is a detailed and informative document. Parents' representatives expressed satisfaction with teachers' availability to discuss pupils' progress. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with parental concerns in a timely manner.
- The management of pupils is praiseworthy. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Their exchanges with their peers and staff are respectful and courteous. Teachers interact with pupils in a very positive and affirming manner.

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

- The board of management plays an active role in the formulation of school policy. A full range of administrative and curriculum policies is in place. Whole-school planning is of a good standard, with each curriculum plan delineating the content for each class level while some contain additional support material for class teachers. In some curriculum plans, there is scope for making further reference to linkage, differentiation and integration. The school has developed a wide range of organisational plans. A section of the enrolment policy refers to discretionary powers reserved by the board in relation to pupils with a disability or membership of an ethnic group. It is recommended that the board revisit this paragraph in the interests of providing greater clarity and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements.
- All teachers prepare long and short-term plans to guide teaching and learning. These plans outline content to be covered; it is recommended that greater reference to proposed teaching methods, learning activities, differentiation and integration be included. Throughout the school, a common approach to the keeping of monthly progress records is used. These informative records provide detail of learning activities in each curriculum area.
- The school periodically engages in self review; several curriculum areas have been prioritised for development. To build on this commendable practice, it is recommended that a planning calendar be drawn up to facilitate cyclical review of curriculum and organisational areas.

- Parents' responses on questionnaires indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of school management and with the education provided to children.
- 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

- I múineadh na Gaeilge cuirtear béim inmholta ar rainn agus amhráin agus tá raon maith díobh ar eolas ag na daltaí. Baineann na hoidí úsáid mhaith as teicneolaíocht an eolais agus na faisnéise chun ceachtanna a léiriú. Úsáidtear fearas mar phuipéid agus ábhair chorpartha go torthúil. Múintear frása na seachtaine go rialta chun foclóir na ndaltaí a leathnú. Léiríonn na daltaí suim sna gníomhaíochtaí foghlama agus baineann siad taitneamh agus tairbhe as na ceachtanna. Baintear feidhm as obair bheirte go rialta. Chun cur leis an dea-chleachtas a breathnaíodh, moltar go gcuirfí áiseanna ar fáil chun úsáid níos rialta as gníomhaíochtaí foghlama comhoibríthe a éascú agus chun deiseanna breise a thabhairt do na daltaí fearas a láimhseáil le linn ceachtanna.
- *In the teaching of Irish commendable emphasis is placed on rhymes and songs and pupils know a good range of these. Teachers make good use of information and communications technology to present lessons. Equipment such as puppets and concrete materials are used productively. The weekly phrase is taught systematically to extend the pupils' vocabulary. Pupils display interest in learning activities and they enjoy and benefit from lessons. Pair work is used regularly. To build on the good practice observed, it is recommended that resources be provided to facilitate more regular use of collaborative learning activities and to provide pupils with further opportunities to handle equipment during lessons.*
- In English, strong emphasis is placed on the development of the pupils' skills in oral language, reading and writing. Structured provision is in place for the development of oral language in both discrete and integrated contexts, with good use made of visual stimuli and pair work. A structured phonological programme, coupled with specific provision for the development of word-attack and comprehension skills, set down the basis for the development of reading skills. A strong focus on home-school partnerships supports this concerted and focused approach. In some instances, teachers could make greater use of running records of pupils' reading. Pupils' writing skills are suitably developed and appropriate attention is given to the writing process. Pupils have frequent opportunities to write in a range of genres and their writing is celebrated through display and the compilation of mini-books.
- Teachers make suitable use of a range of teaching methods and approaches in presenting mathematics lessons. Co-operative learning activities and concrete resources are used to develop pupils' conceptual understanding. Very good attention is given to the development of mathematical language and to providing pupils with opportunities to communicate and reason. There is good provision for the development of problem-solving skills and good use is made of Maths trails. Lesson content is integrated with a range of other curriculum areas, and appropriate attention is paid to revision and linkage of concepts. Classrooms are presented in a stimulating, maths-rich manner but there is

some scope for the further development of the school as a maths-rich environment. Teachers have established home-school partnerships to develop and promote specific mathematical content. Such initiatives are commendable and their use should be extended.

- The well-planned programme of Physical Education incorporates a broad range of curriculum strands. Suitable resources are provided and are used effectively. Careful attention is paid to pupil safety and lessons are well structured, with appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring high levels of pupil participation during lessons and there is commendable focus on skills development. Effective use is made of integration with other areas of the curriculum, notably music and Irish. External tutors provide coaching in some team games.
- Lessons in the four curriculum subjects evaluated are well planned and well taught. A good range of resources is prepared and used well. Teachers make commendable use of interactive whiteboards to enhance lesson presentation. A variety of suitable teaching methods is used effectively and lessons feature high levels of purposeful engagement by pupils. Teachers use a variety of assessment instruments and learning outcomes in each curriculum subject observed during the evaluation are commendable.

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

- The support for pupils with special educational needs is provided in a well co-ordinated manner. There is close collaboration among members of the special education team and there is frequent communication with mainstream class teachers. In-class support is provided in all junior infant classes, and pupils who require additional support are withdrawn in senior infants and first classes. Appropriate formal and informal tests are used for screening and diagnostic purposes. Plans are formulated for individual pupils, following consultation with teachers, parents and other personnel, where necessary. Specific learning targets are set and are reviewed regularly.
- Support is delivered in a caring and supportive manner in print-rich and well organised classrooms. Pupils are actively involved in a broad range of stimulating learning activities. A commendable array of resources has been compiled and is used very effectively to engage pupils. The use of drama and multi-sensory approaches is notable.
- Support for pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) is provided through a structured programme in a focused and vibrant manner using stimulating and interactive resources. It is recommended that greater use be made of in-class approaches to provide EAL support.

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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**

**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 enrolment policy has been reviewed and amended by the Board of Management. The Board of Management is also following up on an Annual Report as discussed with the reporting inspector. The recommendations regarding short term plans were discussed with the reporting inspector at the post evaluation meeting. Changes have been made in accordance with the guidelines on the website that was recommended and with regard to the experience of the teachers.