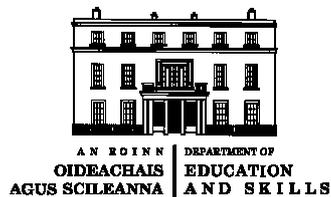


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. Cillian's National School
Bluebell, Dublin 12
Uimhir rolla: 16983J

Date of inspection: 2 October 2013



1. Introduction

St. Cillian's N.S. is a two teacher co-educational school catering for 23 pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Built in 1934 St Cillian's is the smaller of two schools in the parish of Bluebell in what used to be a residential area but is now zoned for industry. The school receives funding under DEIS Band 2. Overall attendance levels are very good with a small number of children absent for more than 20 days. Strategies are in place to promote regular attendance. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

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

- The board, principal, staff and parents are praised for their commitment to the ongoing development of the school and for the welcoming and positive atmosphere.
- The school succeeds in promoting the holistic development of pupils through the provision of a wide range of effective curricular and extracurricular programmes.
- The principal and staff demonstrate high levels of commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism in their work with the pupils.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high in the school.
- The pupils are respectful, well behaved and demonstrate great interest and pride in their school and their achievements in learning.
- The school has a good range of resources which is used purposefully to support teaching and learning.
- The board of management and parents' association give commendable support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The adoption of an action-planning approach, to address school priorities identified through the school's self-evaluation process is recommended.
- To ensure continuity and progression from class to class, it is recommended that more specific content be included in the school's curriculum plans.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive whole-school policy to guide assessment practice in the school be developed. The policy should be informed by the NCCA guidelines.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is comprised of committed members who give generously and voluntarily of their time to provide support to the school. It is properly constituted, clear roles are assigned and minutes are recorded. The board have made commendable efforts to maintain the old school building and its environs to create a safe and attractive environment for the pupils. The board is involved in the development of both organisational and curriculum policies. It is important that all policies are signed when ratified by the board of management and that ratification and review dates are included in all policy documents. Most parents responded that the board keeps them informed of school matters.
- The principal has a long-standing commitment to the school. In addition to carrying out her teaching duties very well she provides clear and effective leadership. She displays a strong sense of pride in the school and the pupils' achievements and she is dynamic in leading the development of curricular, extracurricular and pastoral dimensions of school-life. In the questionnaires all parents responded that the school was well run.
- The school has a good range of resources which teachers use effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Communication with parents is very good. The school has an open door policy in relation to meeting parents. All parents responded that the school is welcoming of them. The school has a very supportive parent body and active parents' association who are involved in a wide range of fundraising and school events during the year. They would be very interested to become involved in other school-based activities such as paired reading, maths games or participation in the *Green School Initiative*. Consideration should be given to involving parents in such activities. Formal parent-teacher meetings are held once a year and other meetings are hosted as requested. An annual written progress report is issued to parents.
- Pupils are managed very well by teachers. The pupils are respectful, well behaved and demonstrate great interest and pride in their school and their achievements in learning. All parents responded that discipline is good in the school and all pupils responded that they know the school rules and that it is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning is good. A range of organisational and curriculum policies have been developed collaboratively. Curriculum plans outline a broad overall content to be taught at each class level. In order to ensure continuity and progression from class to class, it is recommended that more specific content be included in the school's curriculum plans.
- The school has begun the process of school self-evaluation. Standardised test results have been analysed and pupils in the senior class surveyed. The school has prioritised the area of literacy for its focus for the coming year. Building on the planning already undertaken, the adoption of an action-planning approach to address school priorities identified through the school's self-evaluation process is recommended.
- 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 overall quality of teaching and learning is high. Both classroom teachers demonstrate well-developed skills for dealing with multi-classes. Many productive opportunities are provided for pupils to work both collaboratively and independently. Some use of a range of assessment modes was observed including standardised tests in reading and Mathematics, an early-screening test for senior infant pupils, teacher-designed tests and some pupils' self-assessment. It is recommended that the teachers develop a comprehensive whole-school policy to guide assessment practice in the school. The policy should be informed by the NCCA guidelines. The presentation of pupils' work is of a high standard and is to be commended.
- Ar an iomlán tá múineadh sa Ghaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Úsáidtear an Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil go rialta, coinsiasach tríd an lae. Tá an cleachtadh seo le moladh. Baintear feidhm éifeachtach as réimse achmhainní agus modhanna múinte le haghaidh múineadh na Gaeilge. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh agus tairbhe as a gceachtanna. Cuireadh ar chumas na ndaltaí sna dhá seomraí ranga teanga nua a chleachtadh i mbeirteanna nó i ngrúpaí agus tá siad in ann ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt go stuama i nGaeilge. Bhí na daltaí sa seomra sinsearach ábalta sliocht ón téacsleabhair a léamh le tuiscint agus cruinneas. Bhí siad ábalta obair i ngrúpaí chun drámaí beaga a chumadh agus bhí samplaí de scríobhneoireacht na ndaltaí ar chaighdeán maith. Toisc go bhfuil roinnt dena daltaí lán-ábalta sa Ghaeilge b'fhiú anois réimse níos leithne d'ábhar léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil dóibh.
- *The overall standard of teaching and learning in Irish is good. Informal Irish is regularly and conscientiously used throughout the day. This practice is commended. Effective use is made of a range of resources and methodologies to support the teaching of Irish. It is evident that pupils enjoy and benefit from their lessons. Pupils were enabled to practice new language in pairs or groups and could confidently ask as well as answer questions in Irish. In the senior room pupils were able to read passages from the text with accuracy and understanding. They could compose small dramas collaboratively and writing samples of a good standard were in evidence. Because some of the pupils are well able in Irish it would be worthwhile to provide more challenging reading material for these pupils.*
- The standard of teaching and learning in English is very good. All classrooms provide print-rich environments in which language and reading are promoted. Libraries are well stocked and the pupils are exposed to a variety of reading material indicative of the importance the school places on developing and fostering a love of and interest in reading. A range of strategies is employed purposefully to develop pupils' reading skills.

Their independent reading skills are developed through the use of supplementary readers, library books and novels. Pupils demonstrate competent oral language skills and can discuss a range of topics with confidence. Their achievement in reading is very good. Almost all pupils responded that they are doing well at reading. A well-planned model of in-class support ensures that pupils in need of additional help receive it and there is a good focus on early intervention. The quality of pupils' penmanship and the presentation of their work is high. More attention to the specific teaching of the various genres of writing should be included in the planned programme and pupils would benefit from further opportunities to draft and redraft their work.
- There is high quality teaching and learning in Mathematics. Features of lessons include step-by-step instruction, good use of concrete materials and ample opportunities for pupils to work independently and in groups. Differentiation in Mathematics is provided

through in-class support, withdrawal of the less-able pupils for learning-support teaching and individual pupil support while the whole class are on task. All pupils responded that they are doing well in Maths

- There is effective teaching of Geography in the school. Features of practice include, well-structured lessons, clear explanations and careful questioning by teachers. Pupils are afforded ample opportunities to work as geographers and to develop independent thinking skills. Consideration should be given to participation in the *Green School's Initiative*. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is used effectively for project work, research and for consolidation of learning. Pupils display high levels of knowledge of the various topics taught.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The school has a positive, welcoming and supportive atmosphere. A recently-formed special education needs (SEN) team has been established. It comprises two part-time LSRT's operating on a shared basis. Since its formation commendable efforts have been undertaken by the SEN team in collaboration with the class teachers to put an effective in-class system of support for pupils in place. The SEN teachers carefully prepare individual plans and use these to inform their programmes of learning. It is important that in all instances the targets contained in these plans are specific and measurable and based on assessment data. One special needs assistant (SNA) works very well in collaboration with class and support teachers to meet the care and other needs of pupils. The school's policy on special education should be reviewed to clearly outline the staged approach. Teaching observed in support settings is of very good quality. Pupils participate well in sessions and are achieving positive learning outcomes. There is good communication and consultation with parents of pupils with SEN.
- The school shares the services of a HSCL co-ordinator with another school. She works diligently to implement a wide range of initiatives including home visitation, organisation of courses for parents and support for pupils' transition to second level.

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