

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**St. Martin's National School**  
**Brittas**  
**County Dublin**  
**Uimhir rolla: 18173H**

**Date of inspection: 1st February 2012**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Martin's National School is a co-educational school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance of the 85 pupils is good. Strategies are in place to promote regular attendance. 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, principal and staff are commended on the welcoming, supportive and inclusive school atmosphere.
- The principal provides strong leadership to the school and his well-developed organisational skills ensure that the school is operated in an efficient and successful manner.
- The teachers are a vibrant presence in the school. They succeed in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with admirable emphasis placed on the holistic development of pupils.
- The pupils are respectful, well-behaved and are achieving well.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good.
- The school has an impressive range of resources which is used purposefully to support teaching and learning.
- The board of management and parents' association give very good support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- An action-planning approach to monitor the implementation and impact of agreed whole-school priorities should be developed.
- The results of assessment should be used more systematically to inform programmes of teaching and learning for the varying ability levels of all pupils.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The school has a very competent and supportive board of management. It is properly constituted, clear roles are assigned and minutes are carefully maintained. The board is involved in the development of organisational and curriculum policies. The maintenance of the school building by the board is commended.
- The principal, in addition to carrying out his teaching duties, leads the school in an effective and democratic manner. He recognises the talents of individual members of

staff and allows them develop and use these skills to secure school improvement. He is capably assisted by a conscientious and dedicated deputy-principal. There is a very good team dynamic among the staff and all staff members willingly take on additional duties as needed.

- The school has an impressive range of resources which is used purposefully to support teaching and learning. There are attractive displays of pupils' work in a number of curriculum areas in classrooms and around the school. Provision and use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is very good.
- The quality of the communication with parents is very good. All parents responded that the school is welcoming of them. Through its involvement in a wide range of fundraising, community and school events the parents' association gives very good support to the school.
- The principal and staff display commendable levels of commitment to the holistic development of all pupils and this is successfully fostered through the school's wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The management of pupils is excellent. Rules, routines and expectations are explained clearly and understood by all. Pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate respectful attitudes towards each other and their teachers.

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

- A comprehensive whole-school plan including organisational and curriculum plans has been collaboratively developed. The organisational policies give good guidance on the operation of the school. Curriculum plans are of very good quality and include specific guidance on the content and methodologies to be used at each class level.
- Approaches to individual classroom planning vary with some teachers preparing high quality objectives-based planning. An increased focus by all teachers in planning on the specific learning outcomes for pupils and the methodologies to be used is advised. The school has begun the process of school self-evaluation. Some analysis of standardised test results has been carried out and priority areas for future development have been identified. An action plan should now be developed for addressing agreed priority areas and to monitor the implementation and impact of various initiatives on pupils' learning.
- 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 very good. Concepts are clearly explained, resources are used purposefully and pupils' interest in learning is consistently promoted. Some effective assessment practice was observed where teachers use a range of assessment modes including checklists, teacher tests, samples of work and standardised test results. This effective practice should now be extended through teachers using the data to inform specific programmes of teaching and learning for the varying ability levels of pupils. The presentation of pupils' work is of a high standard. Their work is carefully corrected and positive feedback given in many cases.

- Ar an iomlán tá múineadh na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Baintear úsáid éifeachtach as raon leathan straitéisí agus acmhainní i rith na gceachtanna. Sna ranganna naíonán agus sóisearacha tá foclóir bunúsach ar eolas ag na daltaí agus canann siad rannta, dánta agus amhráin le taitneamh agus le fuinneamh. Sna ranganna eile tá stór leathan foclóir ar eolas ag na daltaí agus tá ar a gcumas ag an gcuid is mó díobh briathra a láimhseáil agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Ar an iomlán, áfach, léiríonn na daltaí easpa muiníne sa Ghaeilge labhartha. Moltar scileanna labhartha na ndaltaí a fheabhsú tríd deiseanna níos rialta a thabhairt dóibh páirt a ghlacadh i bhfíorchumarsáid. Tá comtháthú deas ann idir an obair ó bhéal, an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht. Bunaítear an léitheoireacht sa Ghaeilge ar na téacsleabhair agus léann an chuid is mó de na daltaí san ardrang le cruinneas. Sa scríbhneoireacht, obair fheidhmiúil is mó atá i gceist agus b'fhiú deiseanna níos mó a thabhairt do na daltaí tabhairt faoin scríbhneoireacht phearsanta.

*Overall the standard of teaching in Irish is good. Effective use is made of a wide range of strategies and resources by teachers during lessons. Pupils in the infant and junior classes have acquired a basic vocabulary and sing rhymes, poems and songs with enthusiasm and energy. Pupils in the other classes have a wide vocabulary and most of them can handle verbs and ask and answer questions. Overall, however, there is a lack of confidence among the pupils in speaking Irish. It is recommended that the speaking skills of pupils be improved through affording them regular opportunities to communicate in real-life situations. Oral work, reading and writing are well integrated. Reading in Irish is based on the textbook in use and most of the pupils in the senior classes read with accuracy. Writing in Irish is mostly of a functional nature and it would be worthwhile to afford pupils more opportunities to engage in personal writing.*

- The standard of teaching and learning in English is very good. Pupils demonstrate competent oral language skills and can discuss a range of topics with confidence. The school's promotion of positive attitudes to reading is praised. Almost all parents responded that the school is helping their children progress in reading and the majority of pupils said they were doing well in reading. A range of strategies is employed purposefully to develop pupils' reading skills. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and sight vocabulary. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of appropriate novels and their independent reading skills are developed through the use of supplementary graded readers. Reading records are carefully maintained. Ability grouping for reading occurs in some classes. This practice should be extended to accommodate the breadth of ability levels at all class levels. Pupils experience writing in a range of genres and have produced some fine booklets of their own stories and poems. The quality of their penmanship is high.
- There is high quality teaching in Mathematics. Lessons are characterised by clear explanation of concepts and the purposeful use of resources. Pupils engage very well in lessons and demonstrate good levels of understanding of topics covered. Classroom environments are maths-rich and there is commendable emphasis placed on real-life maths. While the overall standards of achievement in Mathematics are good there are a number of pupils in every class who are experiencing difficulty with aspects of the maths curriculum. To fully cater for the varying range of abilities, the analysis of assessment data to inform differentiated programmes of learning in Mathematics is advised.
- Teaching and learning in Science is of a very good standard. Features of effective practice include well-structured lessons, clear explanations and careful questioning by teachers. Pupils are afforded ample opportunities to work as scientists. Environmental awareness and care is well catered for through the school's recycling and gardening programmes. Pupils demonstrate very good awareness of the importance of environmental care. Pupils display high levels of knowledge of the various topics taught.

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

- The school has a positive and supportive atmosphere. Commendable efforts are made to include all pupils in the life of the school. The school's policy on special educational needs (SEN) has recently been reviewed and incorporates the staged approach. Support for pupils in literacy and numeracy is provided primarily through withdrawal in groups or individually. Teaching observed in support settings is of high quality. Pupils participate well in sessions and are achieving positive learning outcomes. Support teachers prepare individual plans and use these to inform their programmes of learning. The learning targets contained in these are based on the pupils' identified strengths and areas for development. In some cases the targets are general in nature. It is important that in planning for pupils with SEN that teachers ensure that the targets are specific and attainable in all instances. The achievement of these targets by pupils should be regularly reviewed. There is very good communication and consultation with parents of pupils with SEN.

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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**

On behalf of the community of St. Martin's NS, Brittas, the Board of Management acknowledges the professional, courteous, friendly and positive manners in which our recent Whole School Evaluation was carried out.

We very much welcome the findings within the report, which recognises the strengths of the school, the pupil's interest in learning as well as their good behaviour, manner and respect shown. The commitment of the staff was also noted as well as the supportive role of the Parents Association and the effective way in which the Board manages the school. We are very much encouraged by the affirmations of the excellent work delivered by our Learning Support Teacher, our Resource Teacher and the school SNA.

##### **Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

An action plan has been adopted in the school plan. This will see the school moving towards a more systematic approach to using assessment so as to inform teaching and learning in the school. These measures will enhance the levels of numeracy and literacy in the school.