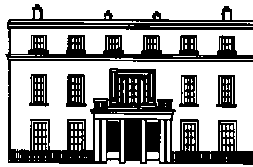


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil San Treasa
Mount Merrion
County Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 18647D

Date of inspection: 5th March 2010



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

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Scoil San Treasa was undertaken in March 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The evaluation focused on the quality of teaching and learning in English, Irish, Mathematics and Physical Education. 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.

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The following table provides an overview of the enrolment and staffing in the school at the time of the evaluation:

| | Number |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Pupils enrolled in the school | 444 |
| Mainstream classes in the school | 16 |
| Teachers on the school staff | 22 |
| Mainstream class teachers | 16 |
| Teachers working in support roles | 7 |
| Special needs assistants | 9 |

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit, mission or vision

Scoil San Treasa is a 444 pupil, co-educational school operating under the auspices of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school's mission statement is clearly articulated in the school plan and is displayed prominently around the school. The school aspires to provide primary education of the highest quality for all its pupils in a happy, safe and Christian environment. It also aims to address the social, personal and moral development of the pupils. The characteristic spirit is manifest in the breadth of school activities provided and in the positive and respectful interactions in evidence between teachers, pupils and their peers. The school acknowledges the role of parents as primary educators of their children and consequently management, staff and parents work closely together to achieve the school's stated goals. Attendance levels are very good with a small number of pupils missing more than 20 days. The school has an attendance policy and strategies are in place to promote and reward good attendance.

1.2 Board of management

The board of management functions in an effective manner and it makes a significant contribution to the successful operation of the school. It is properly constituted in accordance with Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines. Correct procedures are followed. The board meets on a regular basis and detailed minutes are carefully maintained. The school's accounts are certified annually. Clearly-defined roles and responsibilities are assigned to board members and are diligently undertaken. The board of management ensures that regulations regarding class size, the retention of pupils and the length of the school year and day are observed. The board plays a very active role in the development, ratification and review of

policies, both organisational and curricular. It manages policy development very well through the use of individual talents and expertise of board members and through the formation of sub-committees. The board communicates regularly with parents through the parents' association, the school newsletter, a parent-texting service and the school website. The school building consists of both permanent and temporary accommodation. The board is very concerned about the lack of adequate accommodation at the school. An application has been made by the board to the Department for the provision of additional permanent accommodation. The building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. The school is very cognisant of health and safety issues and a safe and stimulating environment has been created.

1.3 In-school management

The quality of leadership in the school is very good. The principal is very committed to the school and gives strong leadership. He promotes good communication within and outside the school. He sees the potential in each individual and he challenges the pupils and staff to use and reach that potential. The school is very well organised and all administrative matters are dealt with thoroughly. The principal delegates responsibility effectively and encourages his staff to use their skills and talents for the benefit of the school. He is very focussed on teaching and learning and monitors the achievement levels of the pupils carefully. The principal pays particular attention to the pupils with special education needs and ensures that they are properly supported and included in all aspects of school-life. The whole-school planning process is led effectively by the principal. A culture of school self-evaluation is successfully promoted.

The in-school management team make a significant contribution to the smooth operation and management of the school. All members of the team carry out their duties willingly and enthusiastically. Their posts include a range of organisational, pastoral and curriculum duties. They are regularly reviewed. While defined duties have been established for the post-holders all staff members respond readily to other needs as they arise. This co-operative and proactive spirit among the staff members reflects the effective team dynamic and collaborative approach that operates in the school.

1.4 Management of relationships and communication with the school community

The parents' association plays a valuable role in supporting the work of the school. It assists in the provision of a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Through its fundraising initiatives, it ensures that all pupils access the full range of school activities. The association also provides direct support for the engagement of a number of external tutors. Members of the association make a worthwhile contribution to the formulation of school policies. Effective communication between the school, the parents' association and parents generally is maintained through the school's website, a parent-texting service and school newsletter. There are procedures in place to deal with parents' concerns. Parents are provided with opportunities to discuss their children's progress through formal and informal parent-teacher meetings and the issuing of an annual written report.

1.5 Management of pupils

The management of pupils is very good. The school's code of discipline and anti-bullying policy are implemented fairly and consistently. There is a positive atmosphere in the school. The pupils are valued members of the school community and the teachers treat them with equality, fairness and respect. The pastoral needs of pupils are managed effectively and their holistic development is nurtured. Commendable levels of pupil behaviour and co-operation are in evidence throughout

the school. The pupils demonstrate positive levels of confidence and self-esteem. They are eager and motivated in their learning and they participate enthusiastically in all school activities.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 Whole-school and classroom planning

The quality of whole-school planning is very good. A collaborative process is used, involving board members, staff and parents, as appropriate. The organisational policies are clear and informative and give very good guidance on the operations and procedures of the school. A range of comprehensive curriculum policies has been developed. A commendable feature of practice is the regular review of all school policies. A selection of school policies has been placed on the school's website to facilitate access by parents and members of the wider school community.

Overall the quality of the teachers' individual planning is good. Approaches to classroom planning vary. Some teachers prepare excellent objectives-based plans on a short-term basis. Others focus more on content. It is important that all teachers take account in their planning of the full range of pupils' abilities through the setting of specific learning objectives and strategies for individuals and groups of pupils. Monthly progress reports are completed by all teachers and these are stored centrally by the principal. It is recommended that these records be constructively used to monitor curriculum implementation and to ensure continuity and progression in learning throughout the school.

2.2 Child protection policy and procedures

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Department of Education and Skills Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Skills, September 2001). Confirmation was also provided 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.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 Language

Gaeilge

Tá múineadh na Gaeilge sa scoil ar chaighdeán an-mhaith. Éiríonn leis na hoidí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge a chothú. Tá suim mhaith sa Ghaeilge ag na tuismitheoirí, ag na daltaí agus ag na hoidí. Forbraítear gnéithe d'fheasacht cultúir na hÉireann trí chluichí, trí damhsa, trí cheol agus trí imeachtaí oiriúnacha a eagrú i rith *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge le linn na gceachtanna agus go neamhfhoirmiúil tríd an lae. Baintear úsáid éifeachtach as raon straitéisí mar obair bheirte, cluichí agus drámaíocht chun scileanna éisteachta, labhartha agus tuiscint na ndaltaí a chothú. Tá an ghramadach comhtháithe go héifeachtach ins na ceachtanna agus tá an dea-chleachtas seo le moladh. Tá réim mhaith d'acmhainní ann le haghaidh múineadh na Gaeilge agus úsáidtear iad go torthúil i rith na gceachtanna. Éiríonn le cuid is mó de na daltaí fíor-chumarsáid a dhéanamh le linn na ngníomhaíochtaí labhartha. Aithrisíonn na daltaí i ngach

rang raon rannta, amhráin agus dánta le brí agus le tuiscint. Tá stórfhocal oiriúnach ar eolas ag na daltaí i ngach rang agus tá an chuid is mó díobh in ann ceisteanna a fhreagairt agus téamaí éagsúla ón churaclam a phlé. Baineann líofacht agus féinmhuinín lena gcumas cumarsáide. Bunaítear an léitheoireacht ar an iomlán ar na téacsleabhair agus na leabhair shaothair. Tá sé ar chumas na ndaltaí na leabhair sin a léamh le líofacht agus le cruinneas. Léiríonn siad tuiscint mhaith ar ábhar na léitheoireachta. Is fiú machnamh a dhéanamh ar éagsúlacht ábhar léitheoireachta a sholáthar agus a úsáid ag gach rang-leibhéal chun léitheoireacht neamhspléach na ndaltaí a fhorbairt níos mó. Múintear scileanna scríbhneoireachta go dícheallach. Cleachtann na daltaí scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus tugtar roinnt deiseanna maithe dóibh scríbhneoireacht phearsanta a chumadh chomh maith. Tá samplaí d'obair na ndaltaí sa ghné seo den churaclam le feiscint sna cóipleabhair agus ar bhallaí na seomraí ranga.

Irish

The quality of the teaching of Irish in the school is very good. The teachers succeed in cultivating a positive attitude to Irish. Parents, pupils and teachers have a good interest in Irish. Aspects of Irish culture are promoted through games, dance and music and through the appropriate activities organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge. Irish is used during lessons and informally throughout the day. Effective use is made of a range of strategies such as pair work, games and drama in cultivating pupils' listening and speaking skills and their understanding. Grammar is integrated effectively in lessons and this good practice is praiseworthy. There is a good range of resources available for the teaching of Irish and these are purposefully used to aid teaching. The majority of pupils demonstrate real communication skills during language activities. The pupils in all classes sing a range of rhymes, songs and recite poems with enthusiasm and understanding. The pupils in each class have a suitable vocabulary range and the majority of them can answer questions and discuss various themes from the curriculum. They display fluency and self confidence in how they communicate. Reading is primarily based on the textbooks and workbooks in use. The majority of the pupils read these books with fluency and accuracy. They demonstrate good understanding of their reading material. Consideration should be given to the provision and use of a wider variety of reading materials at each class level in order to further develop the pupils' independent reading skills. Writing skills are diligently taught. Pupils practise functional writing and some good opportunities are provided for the pupils to develop their personal writing skills. There are fine examples of the pupils' writing to be seen in their copies and on the walls of the classrooms.

English

The overall quality of teaching in English is very good and the achievement levels of the pupils are generally very high. Classrooms provide print-rich environments. The pupils' receptive and expressive language skills are suitably developed through discrete oral-language lessons and through the integration of language learning with other areas of the curriculum. The pupils communicate confidently and competently across a range of themes. They are provided with structured opportunities to engage with the views and opinions of others. A love of reading and an interest in literature are successfully fostered in all classes. Class libraries, in addition to the school library, are well stocked and the pupils are encouraged to borrow and exchange books on a regular basis. A standardised textbook is used in each class to develop the skills of reading. Very good efforts are being made to provide a differentiated approach to the development of reading skills in the infant and junior classes. This practice should be extended through the school. Reading from a variety of genres is encouraged and the pupils can talk confidently and knowledgeably about books they have read. Poetry and rhymes are taught effectively and the pupils in most classes have a wide and varied repertoire of poems which they can recite. It is important to ensure that the opportunity to learn poetry is included in every class. The school is commended for the attention afforded to the development of pupils' letter formation, handwriting

and presentation skills. The pupils are provided with regular opportunities to engage in a wide range of functional and creative writing tasks. Some very good examples of the pupils' engagement in process writing across a variety of genres were in evidence in the pupils' copies and were attractively displayed. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is usefully employed in the publication of the pupils' completed works. However scope for development exists with regard to the regularity with which pupils engage in the breadth of writing genres and in the prevalence of pupil-initiated, process-writing approaches.

3.2 Mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Good emphasis is placed on the teaching of the language of Mathematics and on developing mental mathematical skills. The enjoyment of Mathematics is successfully fostered by the teachers and the pupils engage very well in mathematical activities. Mathematics lessons are well structured and activities are effectively organised. Concrete materials are used meaningfully in all classes to explore concepts and the pupils are encouraged to work together and to share ideas. The pupils are given regular opportunities to engage in problem-solving and to become aware of the links between Mathematics and real life. The interactive white board is used effectively by the teachers to enhance lesson presentation. In the context of the wide range of ability levels of the pupils through the school, it is recommended that consideration be given to further differentiation of mathematics activities. A more differentiated programme would challenge the very able pupils and allow for further consolidation of concepts for the lesser able pupils when necessary. The quality of the written work in Mathematics is generally very good throughout the school and copy work is neatly presented and corrected diligently by the teachers. Overall achievement levels are very high with some pupils showing outstanding ability in Mathematics.

3.3 Physical Education

There is very good provision for Physical Education (PE) in the school. There are excellent resources available and in use for PE lessons. Lessons are well structured to facilitate all pupils' active engagement and succeed in this regard. A suitable emphasis is placed on the development of skills and understanding and on their subsequent usage by the pupils in a range of game contexts. Positive levels of pupils' achievement are in evidence commensurate with their differing ability levels. The pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to PE. Two outside tutors supplement the programme for PE provided by the teachers. The greater involvement of the external providers in the school planning process to ensure a more cohesive approach to the implementation of the PE programme is advised. The pupils at the school are involved in range of after-school sports activities including hurling, camogie, football, soccer and basketball facilitated by members of the teaching staff and coaches. Sporting achievements are celebrated and documented in photographic displays around the school. The involvement of the teachers in the facilitation of after-school sports is lauded.

3.4 Assessment

A detailed whole-school policy to guide the assessment of pupils' progress has been devised. Early-screening tests including the school's own screening test are administered to pupils in infant classes. These serve to identify at an early stage the pupils who may be experiencing difficulty. Standardised tests in English and Mathematics are administered to pupils from first class upwards. The principal ably assisted by a member of the in-school management team has adopted a highly comprehensive approach to the analysis of the results of these tests enabling them to identify overall trends and patterns of achievement. The quality of approaches to

assessment in special education settings is very good. Very good practice includes the close analysis of data gathered during assessment, the setting of specific targets, the development of focused programmes of work based on the assessed needs and the regular monitoring of the achievement of targets. Mainstream class teachers use observation, checklists, teacher-designed tests and tasks to monitor their pupils' progress and record the outcomes of these carefully. It is recommended that all mainstream teachers use the information gathered during assessment to inform programmes of learning for pupils of different abilities. The pupils' work in copies is regularly monitored and corrected by teachers. Feedback to parents is provided at parent-teacher meetings held in the first term of each year and individual pupils progress reports are issued at year end.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

4.1 Pupils with special educational needs

Provision for pupils with special education needs is very good. A comprehensive policy incorporating the staged approach to special education has been developed. A variety of tests is administered to identify individual pupils' particular learning needs and to assist in the development of individual education plans (IEPs). Overall, IEPs are clearly constructed and regularly reviewed, involving appropriate consultation with the principal, class teachers and parents. The standard of teaching observed in SEN settings is very good. Lessons are well structured and teacher/pupil interactions are encouraging and supportive. The pupils engage purposefully in an appropriate range of learning activities in English, Mathematics and social skills. The pupils are making very good progress in these settings and clearly enjoy and engage successfully in the range of learning activities provided.

4.2 Other supports for pupils: disadvantaged, minority and other groups

Scoil San Treasa is an inclusive school where all pupils are treated justly and fairly and where mutual respect is successfully promoted and fostered. All pupils are encouraged to appreciate and value the diversity within their own school community and in the wider world.

5. CONCLUSION

The school has strengths in the following areas:

- Scoil San Treasa is an inclusive school where high standards in education, behaviour and participation are successfully fostered and promoted.
- Management, parents and staff all work closely together to achieve the school's stated goals.
- The quality of leadership in the school is very good. The principal is very committed, enthusiastic and motivated. He fosters individual talents among the staff members and listens to parents, pupils and staff and values their contributions.
- The co-operative and proactive spirit among the staff members reflects the effective team dynamic and collaborative approach that operates in the school.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is very good.
- The pupils are articulate, confident and very proud of their school. They are very respectful towards others and their enthusiasm and interest in learning is commendable.

- Provision for pupils with special education needs is very good
- The school has excellent ICT resources and these are used effectively by the teachers to support teaching and learning.

The following key recommendations are made in order to further improve the quality of education provided by the school:

- It is recommended that all teachers take full account in their planning of the full range of pupils' abilities through the setting out of specific learning objectives and strategies for use with individuals and groups of pupils. Monthly progress reports should be used to monitor continuity and progression across the school.
- All teachers should use the information gathered during assessment to inform programmes of learning for pupils of different abilities.
- Greater involvement of the external providers in the school planning process to ensure a more cohesive approach to the implementation of the Physical Education programme is recommended.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and the board of management where the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.

Published December 2010

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 of Scoil San Treasa welcomes this very positive report, particularly its affirmation of the high quality of teaching and learning in the school, the collaborative commitment of the staff and the support of parents and pupils in achieving the stated goals of the school.

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 recommendations in the report will inform the continuing process of self evaluation and future planning in the school.