

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

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

**Our Lady of the Wayside N.S.**  
**Kilternan, Dublin 18**  
**Uimhir rolla: 18806U**

**Date of inspection: 21 November 2011**



## 1. Introduction

Our Lady of the Wayside National School, Kiltarnan is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It caters for children from junior infants to sixth class inclusive. At the time of inspection there were 321 pupils on rolls. 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 fulfils its duties in an exemplary way.
- Excellent leadership is provided by the school principal.
- The pupils are well-behaved and interested in learning.
- The parents play an active part in the life of the school.
- The facilities and resources in the school are excellent.
- Sound foundations for whole-staff engagement in school self-evaluation have been laid.
- Standardised assessment results in the areas of English and mathematics are very good.
- There is some excellent teaching and learning in the curriculum areas of English and mathematics.
- There is excellent delivery of supports to pupils with special education needs in many settings.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The development of pupil voice through greater use of discussion and debate as well as collaborative and co-operative learning activities in classrooms is recommended.
- Open communication processes at all levels will be essential in ensuring ongoing school improvement.
- A school improvement plan with clearly specified priority targets and measurable success criteria should be developed, followed by cohesive, collaborative and systematic implementation to ensure ongoing school improvement.
- Tá gá go dtabharfaí faoi fhorbairt na scileanna Gaeilge ar bhonn níos díríthí agus níos incrimintí sna cláir Gaeilge a mhúintear i roinnt mhaith seomraí ranga agus ó rang go rang. *There is need for a more incremental and focussed development of Irish language skills in the Irish programmes delivered in several classrooms and from class to class.*
- There is scope for developing team-teaching in English in order to facilitate more effective curriculum delivery.
- Consistent whole-school incorporation of collaborative problem-solving activities into mathematics lessons is recommended.
- There is a need to develop assessment for learning approaches across all curriculum areas.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management works very effectively to provide and manage a very well-organised, richly-resourced learning environment for the pupils in this school. It is very well informed about its duties and responsibilities and fulfils these in an exemplary way. Board members demonstrate a marked commitment to addressing school management

tasks, including policy development and review, as they arise. They give generously of their time and expertise in the execution of their functions and show initiative in addressing the education needs of the pupils.

- Excellent leadership is provided by the school principal. She is very committed to ongoing school improvement and recognises the very good capacity at staff and board of management level in that regard. She gives insightful instructional guidance and has facilitated a practical, incremental planning process that has a clear focus on enriching and extending the learning of all pupils in the school. The duties of the in-school management team have been clearly defined following consultation and are carried out diligently. Very good coverage of curriculum areas is achieved in the curriculum co-ordination duties assigned. There are sound reporting and review mechanisms in place for developing further the curriculum leadership dimension of post-holders' duties.
- The quality, range and extent of the resources (including ICT) available to assist and enrich the learning of pupils in this school are excellent.
- The Parents Association and the parents more generally play an active part in the life of the school. They are involved in policy formation and review. They express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school. Home-school contact is very good. All teachers, special needs assistants, the principal and secretary are accessible to parents as needed. The school web-site, formal and informal meetings with parents, and the regular school newsletters effectively support home-school links.
- The pupils in all learning settings in the school present as polite, well behaved and interested in learning. Their responses in a questionnaire survey of their views about school points to a need to strengthen their voice in the life of the school. The development of pupil voice through greater use of discussion and debate as well as collaborative and co-operative learning activities in classrooms is recommended. Opportunities for developing student-council type activities should also be explored.
- There is very good capacity at school staff and board of management level to improve the work of the school so that excellence in provision may be achieved across the curriculum. Critical to ongoing school improvement will be a sharing of expertise, open and transparent communication processes at all levels, and shared commitment to implementing on a whole-school basis the actions necessary for change.

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

- Sound foundations for whole-staff engagement in school self-evaluation have been laid. A willingness to critically reflect on progress, achievement, and the priority learning needs of pupils is apparent at board level and amongst staff members generally. To ensure the effectiveness of self-evaluation, a school improvement plan with clearly specified priority targets and measurable success criteria should be developed, followed by cohesive, collaborative and systematic implementation to ensure ongoing school improvement.
- Class teachers' short-term planning should reflect the priority targets for each class level. Teachers' individual short-term written plans should indicate the intended provision for skills development within each curriculum area and should include some information on how the learning needs of pupils who require additional supports or challenges are to be met in the mainstream classroom settings.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (September 2011) without

modification. The school is compliant with the requirements of Primary Circular 0061/2006. School authorities provided evidence that arrangements are being put in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as a matter of priority.

## 5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- Tá éagsúlacht shuntasach le brath ar fud na scoile maidir le cáilíocht an teagaisc agus caighdeán foghlama na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. Tá cur chuige gníomhach i bhfeidhm i leith theagasc na Gaeilge i roinnt seomraí ranga. I roinnt eile, tá foghlaim na ndaltaí srianta ag cur chuige éighníomhach mar go bhfuil barraíocht iontaobhe as téacsleabhair agus as cur i láthair teagascach ar bhonn ranga uile a fhágann go bhfuil easpa deiseanna ag na daltaí an teanga a úsáid i gcomhthéacsanna cumarsáideacha agus cruthaitheacha. I roinnt mhaith ranganna, tá gá le soiléiriú a dhéanamh ar na cuspóirí foghlama atá beartaithe i gcomhthéacs phlean scoile chun scileanna áirithe éisteachta, labhartha, léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta a fhorbairt. Sa chomhthéacs sin, ní mór cur chuige níos gníomhaí a úsáid maidir le cur i gcrích an churaclaim ina bhfuil an drámaíocht, an ról-imirt agus feidhmiú na teanga i raon comhthéacsanna cruthaitheacha idir labhartha is scríofa. Moltar géar-athbhreithniú leanúnach a dhéanamh ó bhliain go bliain ar bhonn ranga agus ar bhonn scoile uile ar an mbealach ina bhfuil na scileanna teanga Gaeilge á bhforbairt ag na daltaí.

*There is considerable divergence across the school with regard to the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' learning in Irish. An active approach to the teaching of Irish is evident in a number of classrooms. In others the experiences of the pupils are largely confined to passive learning in that there tends to be an over-reliance on text-books and on whole-class didactic presentation of material with inadequate opportunities for the application and use of the language in communicative or creative contexts. In several classrooms, there is a need for clarity about the intended learning outcomes in the context of a whole-school plan to develop specific listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. In this regard, a more active approach to the implementation of the Irish curriculum that includes drama, role-play and the application of the language in a range of creative contexts, both oral and written, is recommended. Rigorous ongoing review of the extent to which Irish language skills are being mastered should be undertaken annually on a class and whole-school basis.*

- There is some variation in the quality of delivery of the English curriculum across the school. Provision for early literacy development is very good. In a number of classrooms, there is skilful teaching of oral language, phonics, reading and writing, with the pupils' progress and development in these areas carefully tracked. A number of high quality poetry lessons involving language exploration and thematic analysis were observed. Standardised tests in reading are administered with appropriate regularity and good whole-school analysis of the results is undertaken. Overall pupil attainment in English reading is high with outstanding achievement by some pupils in a number of classes. Notwithstanding these attainment levels and the fine examples of teaching in a number of classrooms, there is scope for higher levels of achievement, particularly with regard to writing. Specifically, there is need for a whole-school approach to assessing and analysing pupils' writing and to teaching a coherent, progressive, process writing programme. The development and use of assessment for learning approaches in all classrooms will be important in this regard. There is also scope to develop team-teaching in English in order to facilitate more effective curriculum delivery through focused, cohesive skills teaching within each strand unit and the sharing of professional expertise. This would necessitate a reconfiguration of how resources, including space and personnel, are currently deployed in delivering the English curriculum.

- The quality of mathematics teaching in this school is varied; however, some excellent mathematics lessons were observed. Of particular note is the teaching of early mathematical activities and, in a number of classrooms, the approach to developing the pupils' problem-solving skills. To advance mathematics learning, and to make the existing skilful practice evident in some learning settings a feature of the work in all classrooms, the following are recommended:
  - greater use of active learning approaches generally, and of resources and manipulatives in middle and senior classes
  - consistent whole-school incorporation of collaborative problem-solving activities into mathematics lessons
  - greater linkage between the outcomes of assessment and planning for the future learning of pupils on a whole-school, class and individual pupil basis
  - consistent, practical preparation for the provision of differentiated learning activities suited to the needs of all pupils (including more able pupils and pupils requiring additional supports)
- Review and development of the school's implementation of the visual arts curriculum is one of the medium-term priorities in this school. Nonetheless, some good work in a number of strands of the curriculum, including looking at and responding to art, was evident in several classrooms. Whole-school spiral implementation of the strands in a way that fosters the development of technical skill and creativity is recommended in any future development work in this curriculum area.

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

- Excellent work is undertaken in delivering suitable supports and interventions to pupils in special education needs (SEN) settings. The SEN teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) communicate effectively and work collaboratively to meet the learning needs of pupils in their care. Teaching approaches and monitoring of progress for individual pupils in support settings are very good. Very good use of assessment for learning approaches is evident here. Closer linkage between support teachers and class teachers in curriculum provision is advised. Further, to ensure equality of participation by children with special education needs in all aspects of the work of the school, the strengthening of communication between class teachers and SNAs in relation to the planning of outdoor events and school trips is advised.

*Published April 2012*

# **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 School Community of Our Lady of the Wayside NS, the BOM acknowledges the professional, courteous and positive manner in which the Whole School Evaluation was conducted.

We welcome the findings of the Report, which recognises the strengths of the school, the pupils' interest in learning, the commitment of the staff, the supportive role of the Parents' Association and the effectiveness of the Board in managing the school. We are encouraged by the affirmation of the excellent work delivered by the Learning Support team.

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

We have considered in detail the recommendations made in the Report. We have a very dedicated team and have started working on the recommendations. As a school community we constantly engage in whole school self-evaluation and it is encouraging that some of the recommendations made were already prioritised by our staff.

We are presently in the process of reviewing some of our existing policies and curricular plans.

We will focus on implementing improvements e.g. further developing team-teaching in English and Maths and greater use of active learning approaches in Maths and Irish.