

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

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St Colmcille's Boys' National School
Chapel Lane, Swords
Co. Dublin.**

Uimhir rolla: 18976W

Date of inspection: 02 October 2014



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

1. Introduction

St Colmcille's Boys' National School is an all boys' school, under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The current enrolment is 377 pupils. Attendance levels are very good. During the whole-school evaluation provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Visual Arts was inspected. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream class settings and five 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 school's board of management has successfully supported the ongoing development of a well resourced and inclusive school.
- The school principal and in-school management team provide strong curricular, pastoral and organisational leadership to the school.
- The school is proactive and reflective in its self-evaluation work. This work is supported by very good whole-school and teacher planning.
- Pupils display a keen interest in English, reading and Mathematics.
- Very good provision is in place for Visual Arts.
- Lessons are delivered in a structured, lively and engaging manner.
- Pupils are very interested in their work, applying themselves to tasks and learning activities with focus and enthusiasm. Their work is presented to a very high standard.
- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is provided in a purposeful and engaging manner.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- B'fhiú níos mó béime a chur ar shaor scríbhneoireacht sa Ghaeilge i gcásanna áirithe. *Additional emphasis should be placed on creative writing in Irish in certain instances.*
- Pupil self-evaluation rubrics and progress records in English and Irish reading should be used to a greater extent.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed by a committed and effective board of management. Meetings are held regularly. School accounts are audited annually. The board carefully manages the school, successfully creating a well-resourced school which is inclusive in nature.
- The school is led by a dynamic, enthusiastic and reflective school principal, who provides strong pastoral, organisational and curricular leadership. He is keenly interested in the progress of pupils and successfully empowers colleagues to reflect on and develop pedagogical approaches and initiatives aimed at the highest standards for pupils. The principal is capably supported by the in-school management team. They undertake their duties in a careful, focused and progressive manner.
- The overall quality of the management of resources is high. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to present and develop lesson content. Staff members display high levels of commitment to the school. Teachers regularly undertake professional development courses and share their learning with colleagues. Ancillary staff provides important support for the school.
- The management of pupils is excellent. They are very content in their learning. Teachers and school staff interact with pupils in a very affirming, nurturing and respectful manner.
- Using a broad range of methods, the school regularly communicates with the broader community. The parents' association provides valuable support for the school. The responses to the parent questionnaires administered during the whole-school evaluation (WSE) indicate that a very high proportion of parents think that their child is doing well in school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning is very good. Through the use of annual action plans, school policies are reviewed regularly and collaboratively. Organisational and curricular policies are detailed, comprehensive and practical in design. School self-evaluation practices are very good. The school engages in a range of self-evaluation practices, with commendable provision for regular teacher reflection. School improvement plans for numeracy and literacy have been established. Targets are clearly devised with detailed actions being delineated for their implementation.
- The overall quality of teacher planning is very good. All teachers devise long and short-term plans which are comprehensive in nature, progressively delineating content and pedagogical approaches. Detailed monthly records are also completed.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán teagaisc agus foghlama sa Ghaeilge ard. Déanann ha hoidí iarracht mhacánta an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Cuirtear béim éifeachtach ar Ghaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil. Baineann na daltaí an-taitneamh as na ceachtanna agus glacann siad páirt fhothomhar iontu. Úsáidtear fearas agus cluichí éagsúla go héifeachtach chun na

daltaí a mhealladh chun cainte. Cuirtear béim mhaith ar obair bheirte agus ar dhrámaíocht freisin. Ar an iomlán, léiríonn na daltaí cumas ina gcuid cainte, ach i gcásanna áirithe is féidir níos mó deiseanna a thabairt dóibh feabhas a chur ar a gcuid scileanna cumarsáide. Cuirtear béim inmholta ar fhilíocht agus ar amhránaíocht. Léann na daltaí le muinín. Moltar tuilleadh téacsanna léitheoireachta a sholáthar do na daltaí. Scríobhann na daltaí go cumasach. I gcásanna áirithe, moltar níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí saor scríbhneoireacht a chleachtadh.

The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is high. Teachers make a definite effort to promote Irish. Effective emphasis is placed on informal Irish. Pupils derive great enjoyment from lessons and they partake enthusiastically in them. Resources and various games are used effectively to encourage pupils to speak. Good emphasis is also placed on pair work and drama. Overall, pupils display capability in their conversation, but in some instances, additional opportunities should be provided for them to improve their communication skills. Commendable emphasis is placed on poetry and singing. Pupils read with confidence. It is recommended that additional reading texts be provided for pupils. Pupils write capably. In certain instances, it is recommended that additional opportunities be provided for pupils in creative writing.

- The standard of teaching and learning in English is high. Very good emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' oral language skills. Lessons make suitable provision for talk, discussion and debate. In some cases, language logs could be used more widely to record new language. Structured and focused programmes are in place to develop pupils' phonological, word attack and comprehension skills. Pupils display a keen interest in reading. While there is good provision for the development of literacy through the use of novels, it is recommended that current initiatives to use graded readers be further extended. Highly commendable provision is in place for the celebration of poetry and the writing process. Pupils write capably in a variety of genres. The school's spelling programme and use of dictation exercises is paying clear dividends. The quality of handwriting and work presentation is highly commendable.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Lessons are presented in a very clear, focused and engaging manner. Teachers make very creative and effective use of resources. Pupils are provided with varied opportunities to engage in hands-on activities. Collaborative learning and discussion are used effectively, with some very good exemplars of such practice being noted during the evaluation. Overall, there is very good provision for connecting mathematical content to the life experience of the pupils. In some instances, there is greater potential for pupils to design their own problems and to engage in discussion and self-evaluation about the efficacy of strategies. It is recommended that ability grouping be used judiciously and reviewed regularly.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Visual Arts is very good. A structured whole-school approach to delivering the curriculum is in place. A very good balance between looking and responding and making art is evident. Pupils are active in exploring, experimenting, expressing and enjoying art. Teachers use various stimuli and resources, to effectively ground artistic processes in the pupils' imaginations and life experiences. Pupils are enabled to express themselves using a broad range of media. Highly commendable provision is in place for the display and celebration of pupils' work.
- Teachers approach their work in a diligent and careful manner. In particular, their efforts to provide pupils with a rewarding and enjoyable learning experience are highly commendable. Lessons are delivered in a lively and structured manner, providing the pupils with engaging and active learning experiences. Resources are used very effectively with some very creative exemplars of such usage being noted during the evaluation. Pupils apply themselves to learning with enthusiasm and focus. Their work is presented to a very high standard. Effective assessment practices are in place with

pupils' lesson involvement and work being carefully monitored. In some instances, there is potential for the greater use of progress records in English and Irish reading and the wider use of pupil self-evaluation rubrics. The responses to the pupil questionnaires administered during the whole-school evaluation (WSE) indicate that a very high proportion of them think that their teacher explains things clearly.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of provision for pupils with special education and language needs is very good. Interventions and support sessions are delivered in an engaging and stimulating manner. Teachers use a wide range of resources effectively to stimulate pupils' interest. Lessons observed during the evaluation were characterised by high quality teacher-pupil interactions, with appropriate consolidation of learning. It is evident that pupils benefit significantly from the support provided. The effective use of running records and pupil self-assessment observed in some settings could be extended across the school.
- Planning for pupils with additional learning needs is very well structured. The school has a very clearly defined structure for recording the staged approach to learning support. In supporting language development the use of a cognitive applied language programme (CALP) is highly commendable. Comprehensive individual education plans (IEPs) and group plans which are closely aligned to pupils' needs are prepared and reviewed regularly. The involvement of parents in devising IEPs is a highly commendable practice. To promote consistency it would be worthwhile to agree a more uniform approach to drafting IEPs. It is recommended that current in-class support paradigms be further extended to support early intervention and literacy.
- The special needs assistants work very purposefully to meet the care needs of pupils. The school completion programme effectively complements the school's support structures.

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 welcomes the very positive whole school evaluation report with its affirmation of our well-resourced, inclusive school. It also welcomes the recognition of the high standard of teaching and learning, the strong curricular, pastoral and organisational leadership, the very good school planning and the very affirming, nurturing and respectful manner in which staff and pupils interact. It is pleased that the interest, enthusiasm and focus of the pupils and the very high standard of work presentation are deemed worthy of very positive comment. The board is gratified that the responses to the questionnaires indicated a very high level of satisfaction among parents.

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 board of management welcomes the report's recommendations to build on existing good practice so that the learning experiences of the pupils will be enhanced further. The recommendations will inform the continuing process of self-evaluation and planning in the school.