

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Monica's Infant Girls' National School  
Edenmore, Dublin 5.  
Uimhir rolla: 19037E**

**Date of inspection: 24 November, 2011**



## 1. Introduction

St Monica's Infant Girls' National School caters for girls from junior infants to first class. It is located in Edenmore, Dublin 5. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Current enrolment is 77 pupils. The school is commended on the proactive approach it takes to promoting attendance and overall attendance levels are good. The school is included in Band 1 of the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. 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 is managed by a committed and dynamic board of management.
- The school benefits from the dedicated and strategic leadership of the principal and in-school management team.
- Pupils are making very good progress in all curricular areas evaluated.
- The school regularly examines the success of its educational provision and takes proactive steps to maximise the quality of the learning experience for its pupils.
- The school places strong emphasis on involving parents in the life of the school and in the learning activities of their children.
- Lessons are both stimulating and challenging placing high-quality emphasis on active and engaging learning activities.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about their learning showing pride and interest in their work.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is delivered in a very targeted and affirming manner.

*The following **main recommendations** are made:*

- It is recommended that the current good practices in relation to providing for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) be formalised into a policy.
- It is recommended that in the next allocation of teachers to classes, priority be given to pupil-teacher ratios that are more in line with Department of Education and Skills Circular 0019/2011.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed by a very dynamic and committed board of management. Meetings are held regularly with minutes being taken. School accounts are audited annually. The board's priorities include the development of policies, the strategic management of the school's finances and resources, parental involvement in the life of the school and the cultivation of a warm and welcoming school atmosphere. The board is commended on its annual newsletter which informs the community of its activities and work for the year.
- The principal provides organised, strategic and dynamic leadership to the school. She is successful in promoting curricular and pastoral leadership, ably empowering staff and the wider school community to engage with new learning initiatives. The principal is

supported by an enthusiastic and committed in-school management team. They meet regularly and along with the rest of the staff, drive initiatives and changes aimed at developing the quality of learning in the school.

- The management of pupils is of a very high quality. Excellent classroom procedures and practices have been established. Teachers interact with pupils in a very positive and affirming manner.
- The school has a comprehensive and stimulating selection of resources including a very attractive and well-stocked library. As a result of the school's focus on early intervention this school year, pupil-teacher ratios in the infant classes were reduced. However, while such an initiative resulted in small class sizes at junior and senior infant levels, it increased the pupil-teacher ratio considerably in first class. It is recommended that in the next allocation of teachers to classes, priority be given to pupil-teacher ratios that are more in line with Department of Education and Skills Circular 0019/2011.
- The school communicates regularly with parents via its website, memos, fliers and newsletters. Parent-teacher meetings take place annually with an additional meeting taking place for parents of pupils in first class in the third term. Data from parent questionnaires indicate that a very high proportion of them think that 'teaching is good in the school'.

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

- Overall, the quality of school planning is very good. Detailed and focused policies which place very good emphasis on the progressional development of concepts and skills are in place for all curricular areas. Clear policies are in place for a wide range of organisational areas. As part of its self-evaluation processes, the school regularly reviews its organisational and curricular policies. It is recommended that the current good practices in relation to providing for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) be formalised into a policy. Standardised test results and other school assessment data indicate that the school's DEIS action plan is having a very positive effect on learning.
- Teacher planning is of a very good quality. All teachers write long and short-term plans which clearly delineate the content to be covered in a sequential and detailed manner. Very good provision is in place for differentiation, linkage and integration. Monthly reports are completed which provide specific information on content covered.
- 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**

- Déantar pleanáil chuimsitheach do mhúineadh na Gaeilge, le béim inmholta ar úsáid chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil le linn an lae. Tá luas agus struchtúr éifeachtach sna ceachtanna. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as modhanna éagsúla teagaisc. Baintear feidhm thorthúil as cluichí, acmhainní agus grúpobair. Ceanglaítear ábhar na gceachtanna go cruthaitheach le saol agus timpeallacht na ndaltaí agus mar sin, spreagtar a suim agus a rannpháirtíocht sna ceachtanna. Ar an iomlán, cuirtear béim mhaith ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach, ach i gcásanna áirithe, b'fhiú níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí an teanga a chleachtadh. Leagtar béim inmholta ar

nuacht, amhráin agus ar fhilíocht agus tá raon maith rainn bheaga agus amhráin ar eolas ag na daltaí. Is léir go mbaineann na daltaí taitneamh agus tairbhe as na ceachtanna.

- *Comprehensive planning is in place for the teaching of Irish with commendable emphasis on the use of informal Irish throughout the school day. Lessons have effective pace and structure. Teachers make effective use of various teaching methods. Resources, games and group work are used fruitfully. Lesson content is creatively linked to the life and environment of the pupils and accordingly, their interest and involvement in lessons is stimulated. In the main, good emphasis is placed on the communicative approach, but in some instances, it would be worthwhile to give pupils more opportunities to practice the language. Commendable emphasis is placed on news, songs and poetry and pupils know a good selection of rhymes and songs. It is clear that pupils enjoy lessons and derive benefit from them.*
- In English, the school adopts a structured and systematic approach to the development of pupils' reading, writing and oral language skills. Lessons are characterised by the use of differentiated teaching, an emphasis on focused learning activities and the use of initiatives such as a literacy hour. Discrete oral language lessons provide pupils with suitable opportunities for collaborative learning with concrete stimuli being employed effectively. Pupils' reading is developed effectively through the use of differentiated reading programmes, the development of phonological and word-attack skills, an emphasis on comprehension and a focus on reading for pleasure. Pupils' writing skills are systematically developed with very good emphasis on different writing genres. There is very good provision for poetry and rhymes in the school.
- In recent times, the school has made a concerted drive to develop standards in Mathematics. This involved a review of planning and teaching methods and an analysis of assessment data. In addition, parental support was targeted and resources were augmented. This drive is paying clear dividends in terms of pupils' progress. Teachers place strong emphasis on active learning experiences, making very good use of concrete resources, collaborative learning and focused activities. Suitable differentiation practices are in use with very good emphasis on the development of reasoning, communicating and problem-solving skills. Mathematical content is creatively integrated with other curricular areas. Good provision is in place for the development of mathematical language and the school and individual classrooms are very well presented as maths-rich environments. The school's savings scheme also provides a concrete basis for pupils' understanding of number.
- Very good provision is in place for the delivery of the Drama curriculum in both discrete and integrated settings. It is used creatively to develop lesson content in a number of scenarios. Teachers make very creative and effective use of resources, collaborative activities, discussion and fictional settings to enable pupils to engage physically, emotionally and intellectually in the world of Drama. In some instances, teachers make very good use of Drama as a tool for developing pupils' comprehension in reading.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education is very good. Very good provision is in place for the delivery of all strands of the curriculum with resources being used to very good effect. Lessons are well structured with suitable warm-up and cool-down activities. Pupils engage enthusiastically in activities which are well organised and are focused on the development of specific skills. School staff is also commended for their regular involvement in the 'Be Active' after-school programme and the annual 'Active School Week'.
- In the subjects evaluated, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Lessons are very well planned and make very good use of resources and a range of teaching methods. Very good differentiation practices are in place which, when combined with

active learning strategies, serve to create learning experiences which challenge and engage the pupils.

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

- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It is characterised by high-quality planning, continuous assessment and regular review of targets. In delivering support, teachers make creative use of a wide range of teaching approaches with commendable emphasis on the use of concrete resources and challenging activities.
- The school adopts a multi-pronged approach to providing support for pupils in literacy. Support is targeted at all class levels and is guided by teaching approaches which place commendable emphasis on the active involvement of pupils and the development of specific skills. Pupils are also provided with support in numeracy, particularly in first class. This support focuses systematically on the identification of specific learning needs and the provision of a structured scheme to develop mathematical skills.
- The school benefits from the work of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator who provides support in a very organised and innovative manner. Support is also provided for pupils with English as an additional language. This support, which is provided in-class and in withdrawal contexts, follows a definite structure and is guided by clear and focused planning. Activities are very well designed, serving to provide a stimulating and varied learning experience for the pupils.

*Published March 2012*

# **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 St Monica's Infant Girls' School wishes to acknowledge the professional and courteous manner in which the evaluation was undertaken. The board is delighted that the report affirms the hard work and dedication to the school displayed by all members of the school staff, and acknowledges the inspectorate's findings in relation to the very good quality of provision for Mathematics, English, Drama and Physical Education in particular. The board wishes to congratulate the entire school staff and to express its appreciation of the contribution made by the Parents' Association to 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 board and school community are working collaboratively to create a formalised EAL policy pertaining to the specific needs of our school.
- The allocation of teachers to classes in forthcoming years will prioritise pupil-teacher ratios more in line with DES Circular 0019/2011, while also taking into account personnel numbers and class combinations that are favourable to the successful delivery of our mathematics and literacy programmes.