

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Pius X Girls' National School  
Fortfield Road  
Terenure  
Dublin 6W  
Uimhir rolla: 19178W**

**Date of inspection: 26 May 2011**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Pius X Girls' National School is a primary school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Attendance of the 491 pupils is very good. A small number of pupils are absent for more than twenty days. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and three 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 principal gives strong leadership to the school and her well-developed organisational skills ensure that the school is run in a highly efficient and successful manner.
- The teachers demonstrate effective teaching skills and present well-prepared lessons in a lively and interesting manner.
- The standard of pupil achievement in English and Mathematics is high.
- The pupils are respectful and articulate. They engage very well in lessons. Their holistic development is successfully promoted through the provision of a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- The school has an impressive range of resources which is used purposefully to support teaching and learning.
- Provision and use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is excellent.
- Commendable support is given to the school by the board of management and parents.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The school's admissions policy requires review to ensure that parents are fully informed of the provisions of the Education Act 1998 under Section 15 regarding the enrolment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and the right of appeal under Section 29.
- The school's assessment policy should be augmented to include agreed modes of continuous assessment across all curriculum areas. The results of assessment should be used more systematically to inform programmes of teaching and learning for the varying ability levels of all pupils.
- An action-planning approach to addressing the school's agreed priorities should be adopted.

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The cohesive, hard working board of management gives commendable support to the school. It ensures that the school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. Board members are involved in the development of all organisational policies. They keep themselves informed of the content of curriculum policies and all policies are ratified. Members of the board demonstrate good awareness of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The school's admissions policy requires review to ensure that parents are fully informed of the provisions of the Education Act 1998 under Section 15 regarding the enrolment of pupils with SEN and the right of appeal under Section 29.
- The principal has a long-standing commitment to the school and demonstrates effective leadership skills. She recognises the individual talents of her teaching staff and uses these effectively to secure ongoing school-development. The in-school management team work well together carrying out a wide range of duties willingly. Almost all parents surveyed that they are happy with the school.
- The school has an impressive range of resources which is used effectively to support teaching and learning. In addition to a well-organised school library there are rooms dedicated to computers, reading and science. There are attractive displays of pupils' work in a number of curriculum areas in classrooms and around the school. There is excellent provision and use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).
- The pupils are managed very well by the teachers and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect throughout the school. The overwhelming majority of the pupils surveyed responded that they like school and feel safe in the school and playground.
- The school has in place a range of effective procedures to facilitate communication with parents. These include a school prospectus, parent-teacher meetings, annual written reports, regular newsletters and the school website. The school has a very active parent/teacher association (PTA) shared with the adjacent boys' school. It supports the school in a significant way through fundraising and the co-ordination and management of a wide range of extra-curricular activities including swimming, Spanish and chess.

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

- A collaborative approach to whole-school planning is used by teachers. A wide range of organisational plans has been developed. These are specific to the school context and give clear guidance on the operation of the school. Plans for all curriculum areas have been devised and teachers make good use of these to inform their classroom planning. The quality of teachers' individual planning is very good with all teachers using an agreed, objectives-based approach. The school has begun to engage in the process of school self-evaluation. Pupils have been surveyed about bullying and priority areas for future development have been identified and agreed. An action-planning approach should now be adopted to addressing the agreed priority areas and to monitoring the impact of various initiatives on pupils' learning.
- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Evidence was provided to show 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.

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

- Ar an iomlán, tá múineadh na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán maith. Baintear úsáid éifeactach as raon d'acmhainní agus straitéisí mar obair bheirte, cluichí, dánta agus amhráin. Cuirtear béim oiriúnach ar an bhfoclóir, ar an ngramadach agus na struchtúir teanga. Léiríonn an chuid is mó de na ndaltaí tuiscint mhaith agus déanann siad sár-iarracht úsáid a bhaint as an stórfhocal breá leathan atá ar eolas acu. Cé go bhfuil sé ar chumas formhór na ndaltaí ceisteanna simplí a chur agus a fhreagairt, tá gá a gcumas cumarsáide a fhorbairt ar bhonn córasach tríd an scoil. B'fhiú deiseanna níos rialta a thabhairt do na daltaí páirt a ghlacadh i bhfíorchumarsáid. Sroichtear caighdeán breá sa léitheoireacht agus léann na daltaí le tuiscint agus le líofacht. Cé go bhfuil dul chun cinn sásúil le feiscint i gcumas scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí, scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil is mó atá i gceist. Moltar anois níos mó béime a dhíriú ar scileanna scríbhneoireachta neamhspleácha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt ar bhonn rialta.

*In general, the teaching of Irish is of a good standard. Effective use is made of a range of resources and strategies such as pair work, games, poems and songs. Appropriate emphasis is placed on vocabulary, grammar and language structures. Most pupils demonstrate good understanding and make great efforts to use their wide vocabulary range. While a majority of pupils are capable of asking and answering simple questions, the systematic development of their communicative abilities throughout the school is needed. More regular opportunities should be provided for pupils' participation in authentic communication activities. Good reading standards are achieved and pupils read with understanding and fluency. While pupils are making satisfactory progress in writing the emphasis is on functional writing. More systematic attention should be placed on the development of their independent writing abilities.*

- The standard of teaching and learning in English is high. Very good provision is made for the development of oral language skills and most pupils engage fluently, articulately and confidently in discussion. Poetry is well taught and pupils in all classes can recite a range of poems. In many classes pupils are afforded opportunities to compose their own poems. Explicit teaching of reading skills is a feature of lessons across the school. Ability-grouping for reading occurs in some classes. This practice should be extended to all classes to accommodate fully the breadth of ability levels. Most pupils in senior classes demonstrate high levels of fluency and comprehension in reading. Effective use is made of class novels to foster and cultivate responses to literature. Many pupils produce writing of high quality in a variety of genres. In some classes excellent provision is made for all stages of the writing process. This very good practice should be extended throughout the school. The presentation of pupils' written work is excellent and the standard of their penmanship is high.
- There is high quality teaching and learning in Mathematics. Features of effective practice include productive collaborative learning opportunities, promotion of problem-solving strategies and a multidimensional approach to mental maths. Teachers pay very good attention to the development of mathematical language. The pupils engage very well in lessons and they demonstrate laudable levels of understanding of topics covered. Excellent use is made by some teachers of data to inform pupils' learning targets and to monitor and track their progress. The current model of in-class support could be further developed to incorporate explicit short-term planning for differentiated learning outcomes for groups and individuals.

- The teaching of Drama is of a high standard. It is taught both as a discrete subject and as a methodology across the curriculum. Very good use is made of drama games, props, collaborative learning, and story and mime in the teaching of this curriculum area. Pupils are afforded ample opportunities to explore and make Drama, reflect on Drama and co-operate and communicate in making Drama. Pupils engage convincingly in lessons. They demonstrate very good improvisational skills and an ability to stay in role and to answer in role.

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

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Provision is made for different approaches with teachers using a combination of in-class support and withdrawal in groups or individually, as appropriate. The school's special education policy incorporates the staged approach. Environments are attractive well-resourced and aesthetically pleasing. All teachers prepare individual plans and use these to inform their programmes of support. The learning targets are based on the pupils' strengths and areas for development. Some of these targets are general in nature. It is important that in planning for pupils with special educational needs that teachers ensure that the targets, particularly in literacy, are specific and attainable in all instances. The achievement of these targets by pupils should be regularly monitored. In organising special needs support greater emphasis should be placed on early intervention measures and by increasing the amount of in-class support.

*Published December 2011.*

**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 and the staff of St Pius X G.N.S. wish to acknowledge the professionalism and courtesy of the Inspectorate during our recent Whole School Evaluation. We welcome the very positive findings of the team and would like to take this opportunity to commend the dedication and commitment of the entire staff of St Pius X G.N.S. and are committed to implementing the recommendations as outlined in the report.