

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Our Lady of Victories Infant School
Ballymun Road, Dublin 9
Uimhir rolla: 19242F**

Date of inspection: 10 February 2011



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

1. Introduction

Our Lady of Victories Infant School, which is located on the Ballymun Road, Dublin 9, caters for boys and girls from junior infants to first class. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Currently there are 219 pupils in the school. The school is included in Band 1 of the School Support Programme for Delivering Equality of Opportunity to 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 has a dynamic in-school management team led by a caring, well-organised principal.
- A pleasant, nurturing atmosphere permeates all school activities. Pupils are well mannered, courteous and co-operative.
- The board of management works effectively and has built up positive relationships with parents and the wider school community.
- The school has an excellent stock of teaching and learning resources. Of particular note is the range of play equipment that has been provided in the school playground.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. Well structured approaches to the development of oral, reading and writing skills are in place.
- The school's attendance strategy is working effectively and has resulted in a sustained improvement in average attendance levels.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that the school should review its system of teacher allocation. Currently, pupils are assigned to the same teacher for their three years in the school. It is recommended that a system which exposes pupils to the teaching styles and expertise of more than one teacher should be considered.
- It is recommended that the structure of the monthly progress record be reviewed to provide a simpler, more succinct account of the work completed in classes.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management oversees all aspects of the organisation and operation of the school in an effective, efficient manner. The board is properly constituted and specific roles have been assigned to individual members. Some members have participated in boards of management for many years; they bring a wealth of experience which enhances the board's effectiveness. Detailed minutes of meetings are kept and school accounts are monitored appropriately.
- The board facilitates school policy development and satisfactorily oversees the planning process. The board actively encourages and financially supports staff development.

- The school is led by a caring, well-organised principal who is supported by a cohesive, dynamic in-school management team. Members of the in-school management team periodically review areas of responsibility to meet the changing needs of the school. To enhance the good work already underway, it is recommended that team members provide an annual report to the board on the work completed in their particular areas of responsibility.
- The management of pupils is excellent. All classroom interactions occur in a pleasant, affirming manner and pupils engage positively in the learning activities.
- Pupils' attendance is very good. The attendance strategy has resulted in a sustained improvement in average attendance levels.
- Currently, pupils are assigned to the same teacher for their three years in the school. It is recommended that a teacher-allocation system which exposes pupils to the teaching styles and expertise of more than one teacher should be considered.
- The school has acquired a very good stock of resources. Of particular note is the play equipment, which pupils enjoy using at break times, that has been provided in the school playground.
- A very good sense of community exists in the Ballymun area and the school has forged strong links with community organisations and parents.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A comprehensive three-year action plan has been compiled under the DEIS programme. The plan identifies specific targets and describes appropriate teaching and learning strategies to improve levels of literacy, numeracy, attendance and parental involvement.
- The quality of whole-school planning is good. The plan addresses all curriculum areas; it was devised co-operatively and ratified by the board of management.
- Teachers at each class level work co-operatively to prepare long-term plans. Additionally, all teachers provide a short-term plan for their own work in the classroom. Teachers also prepare a good range of resources to improve lesson quality and scaffold pupils' learning.
- It is recommended that the structure of the monthly progress record be reviewed to provide a simpler, more succinct account of the work completed in classes.
- 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

- Leagtar béim inmholta sa phlean ar úsáid neamhfhoirmiúil na Gaeilge mar theanga chumarsáide sa scoil. Cuirtear béim freisin ar shuim agus ar thaitneamh daltaí a chothú

le linn ceachtanna. Soláthraítear ceachtanna suimiúla agus cuirtear béim inmholta ar stóras focal, ar líofacht agus ar chumas cumarsáide na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Bíonn ceangal láidir idir ábhar na gceachtanna, achair spéise, saol agus eispéireas na ndaltaí. Baintear dea-úsáid as teicneolaíocht na faisnéisne agus na cumarsáide chun na ceachtanna Gaeilge a léiriú agus chun comhrá na ndaltaí a scafláil. Ar an iomlán, bíonn na daltaí gníomhach sna ceachtanna agus baineann siad leas agus taitneamh as na cluichí beaga teanga a eagraíonn na hoidí. Tá go leor píosaí filíochta agus rainn bheaga foghlamtha acu freisin. Chun cur leis an dea-obair seo, moltar cur leis an tréimhse réamhchumarsáide sna ceachtanna agus ionchur teanga níos saibhre a thabhairt do pháistí. B'fhiú na rainn agus an fhilíocht do gach rang a chuimsiú go hiomlán sa phlean scoile freisin.

- *In the school plan, commendable emphasis is put on the informal use of Irish as the language of communication throughout the school. Emphasis is also put on cultivating pupils' interest and enjoyment during lessons. Interesting lessons are provided and due weight is given to developing pupils' vocabulary, fluency and ability to communicate. Lessons are strongly connected to the interests, life and experiences of pupils. Good use is made of information and communication technology to illustrate lessons in Irish and to scaffold pupils' conversations. In general, pupils are active during lessons and they benefit from and enjoy the language games that teachers organise. They have learned a good deal of rhymes and poems also. To improve this good work, it is recommended that the pre-communicative stage in lessons be extended and that a richer input of language be provided. In addition, it would be valuable to include in the school plan the full range of rhymes and poems to be taught in each class.*
- The quality of teaching and pupil achievement in English is very good. A wide range of stimulating resources has been provided to support each area of the English curriculum. The school uses a structured oral language development programme and a sequential phonological programme. Pupils express themselves confidently. As part of its continuous review of the English programme, the school recently reviewed its modes of assessment and has sourced a range of appropriate assessment tools for oral language.
- The school deploys an admirable range of books to teach reading. It is commendable that reliance on one reading programme is not the preferred approach in the school. Teachers have engaged in professional development programmes to enhance and improve pupils' reading and writing skills. The positive effects of these programmes are particularly evident in the samples of pupils' writing in copybooks, folders and displayed in corridors. Pupils' written work is well monitored and teachers provide positive, useful comments on pupils' work. It is recommended that less emphasis be placed on formal approaches to teaching grammar, and in line with the *Primary School Curriculum*, that pupils' knowledge of the conventions of grammar be developed in the context of their general language development.
- Mathematics lessons are guided by clear learning objectives and are presented in a succinct, focused manner. Suitable provision is in place for the use of concrete materials and hands-on activities. Good differentiation practises were observed in all mathematics lessons. There is good provision for linkage and integration in the programme. It is recommended that the school should explore greater opportunities to provide maths trails and to develop the school environment as a maths-rich area.
- In Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), formal lessons are underpinned by a warm, nurturing atmosphere that pervades all school activities. A balanced SPHE programme is implemented successfully and suitable lesson content from the various curriculum strands is chosen. A good range of resources, compiled by the in-school management team, is available and appropriate commercial and state-sponsored programmes are used judiciously. While circle time is used effectively to explore certain

themes and to facilitate pupil participation, it is recommended that a wider range of activity-based methods, such as role play, drama and pair work, be explored to complement the use of discussion. The school has taken proactive steps to provide structured outdoor play areas to support pupils' enjoyment and social development during break times.

- In the four curriculum areas evaluated, lessons were seen to be well resourced and purposefully presented. Pupils are interested in their work and were seen to be engaged and fully involved in the learning activities. Pupils' written work is well monitored. There is a variety of assessment practices in use, some of which are very effective and easily implemented. It is recommended that the school should investigate the extension of such good practices to a whole-school level.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Support for pupils with additional learning needs is well organised and provided in both in-class and withdrawal contexts. A good battery of assessment tests is used to evaluate pupils' progress and identify individual needs. Provision for pupils' is very well resourced. Perceptive and continuous monitoring of progress is a feature of the system and assessments inform the adaptation of learning programmes.
- The school is included in the DEIS band 1 programme and accesses a range of supports to offset the effects of disadvantage. It makes targeted and co-ordinated use of the supports to provide an appropriate range of learning experiences to pupils

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 Our Lady of Victories Infant School would like to thank the inspectors of the Department of Education and Skills for the professional and courteous manner in which they carried out the Whole School Evaluation in February 2011. We welcome the report's recognition and commendation of the work of the Board of Management, Principal and Teaching staff in ensuring the children experience a high quality of teaching and learning in a pleasant, nurturing atmosphere. The Board of Management acknowledges and appreciates the contribution made by the Parents' Association, parents and pupils, Special Needs Assistants and ancillary staff.

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 and Staff know the importance of planning and self-evaluation and are committed to carrying out the recommendations of the inspectors.

To date:

- We have changed our teacher allocation system
- We are working towards a simpler, more succinct monthly progress record and have implemented and will implement other recommendations in the report.