

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS
Johnstown, Killiney
Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 19321B**

Date of inspection: 23 May 2012



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

1. Introduction

Our Lady of Good Counsel Girls NS, Johnstown is a large, vertical school which operates under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. It is a vibrant, welcoming environment where pupils engage positively in well planned learning activities. Attendance rates are very good. 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:

- This is a vibrant school where staff members contribute positively to its development.
- The quality of leadership in the school at all levels is effective.
- The pastoral care of the pupils is very good.
- Pupils engage very well in their learning. They are self confident, highly motivated and enthusiastic learners.
- The quality of school self evaluation, the process of whole-school planning and reflection among the staff is very good.
- Very good resources and displays contribute to the creation of very good learning environments.
- The integrated approach to language development is very good.
- The teaching of Geography is of a very good standard.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In developing its work on providing differentiated programmes of learning, further consideration should be given to how best to challenge the most able pupils in the school.
- A strategic approach to the development of higher-order thinking skills across the curriculum should be devised.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management contributes effectively to the work of the school. Previous and new members are concerned with the provision of an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for all pupils in the school. Significant and worthwhile attention is paid to policy development.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is very good. The principal offers very good curriculum and administrative leadership and is capably supported by the members of the in-school management team. Very good structures are in place to support school self evaluation processes. Committees established to ensure effective curriculum implementation work very well. The contribution of all staff members to this process is noted. The impact and outcomes of this work should form the basis for future deliberations regarding school self evaluation.
- This is a vibrant, effective school which constantly seeks to improve the educational experiences of its pupils. Initiatives such as the introduction of a student council, participation in the Green Schools programme, regular assemblies for pupils and the involvement of parents in many aspects of school life are highly commendable. In questionnaires, both parents and pupils strongly endorse the work of the school.
- The quality and management of resources in the school is excellent. Structures to support communications between the school and its community are very good. Relations between teachers and pupils are respectful and positive.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. There is a very good understanding of the purpose of school self evaluation among staff members. Curriculum and administrative issues are reviewed systematically. All members of staff contribute to this process. Suitable targets have been set and the committee system allows for detailed consideration of current practice.
- The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation is evident in the practice of the teachers, the type of learning experiences offered to the pupils and the overall administration of the school.
- Some excellent planning and assessment practices were observed during the evaluation. All teachers provide plans for their work and record learning outcomes. Various templates to support this have been devised. These need to be embedded in practice. It is advised that long term plans be more objective based and linked more effectively to the school plans for the various curriculum areas.
- 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

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is impressive. Some very high quality teaching was observed. Lessons were well structured, well resourced, well planned and delivered at an appropriate pace. A variety of teaching approaches employed in classrooms, along with the sharing of learning objectives with the pupils ensures that there is very good engagement from the pupils with their learning activities. The integrated approach to language development is a particular strength in the school.
- Assessment practices in the school are good and, in some instances, exceptionally good. In these latter instances, teachers skilfully use assessment data to inform their teaching

through the planning process. An element of pupil self assessment is evident in many of the classrooms. This practice could be developed further.

- The teachers and staff are commended for the manner in which they strive to improve learning outcomes among the pupils. They have demonstrated great capacity to improve pupils' learning experiences. Extending and challenging the more able pupils, the setting of targets for weaker pupils, the provision of more independent learning opportunities across the school and the sharing of individual expertise are among the challenges facing the school.
- The most significant challenge centres on the development of the pupils' higher order thinking skills. While there are obvious opportunities to pursue this in Mathematics, it is recommended that the issue be considered on a broader level to include higher order work in most areas of the curriculum.
- Tá dea-láithreacht don Ghaeilge timpeall na scoile. Cuirtear béim oiriúnach ar úsáid as Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil tríd an scoil. I ranganna áirithe, tá múineadh na Gaeilge ar chaighdeán an-ard. Is soiléir go gcothaíonn na hoidí dearcadh dearfach i leith na teanga i measc na ndaltaí. I ranganna eile, áfach, b'fhiu do na hoidí deiseanna sa bhreis a thabhairt do na daltaí a stór foclóra a chleachtadh. Sna chásanna sin, moltar modh an aistriúcháin a sheachaint. Cuirtear pleananna ar fáil mar thaca don fhoghlaim. Moltar aird a dhíriú iontu sin ar na modhanna múinte is oiriúnaí.
- San iomlán, déantar dea-iarrachtaí an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh trí mheán Gaeilge amháin. Aithrisítear go leor rannta agus amhráin go fonnmhar. Léann na daltaí go sásúil ach moltar anois, go dtugtar deiseanna sa bhreis dóibh comhrá níos leithne a dhéanamh ar ábhar na léitheoireachta. Cleachtar scríbhneoireacht go sásúil sa scoil. An dúshlán atá ann ná na daltaí a spreagadh chun scríobh as a stuaim féin.
- *There is a good presence for Gaeilge around the school. Good emphasis is evident on the informal use of Gaeilge throughout the school. In some classes, the teaching of Gaeilge was of a very high standard. It is evident that the teachers nurture a positive regard for the language among the pupils. In some classes, however, the teachers should give more opportunities to the pupils to practise their vocabulary. In these instances, it is advised that translating is avoided. Plans are presented to support learning. In this work, it is advised that further consideration be given to the most appropriate teaching methodologies.*
- *For the most part, very good efforts are made to teach Irish through Irish only. Poems and songs are recited enthusiastically. The pupils read satisfactorily, though further opportunities should be given to the pupils to discuss their reading material at a broader level. Writing practices in the school are satisfactory. The challenge now centres on encouraging the pupils to create their own writing.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is commendable. The pupils present as confident learners and the range of activities implemented for language development is impressive. Oral language development throughout the school is well linked to the development of writing skills. It is evident that there is considerable discussion at staff level around how best to teach and develop language. This level of discussion is good and the outcomes of these deliberations benefit the pupils.
- The pupils are motivated readers. Some very good practices regarding the development of reading skills were observed. These included the setting of targets for the number of books read, the completion of book reviews and 'book buddies.' Pupils have good access to reading material at instructional level. Novels are used to very good effect in

classes. In developing this work, consideration should be given to identifying the comprehension strategies to be developed. For those readers who experience difficulty in accessing the class novel, consideration should be given to alternative strategies which could include the pre-teaching of vocabulary and the use of a second novel in the classrooms. As the pupils progress through the school, there is a need to maintain a specific focus on the development of reading skills.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. A comprehensive school plan for Mathematics has been devised. Very good efforts have been made to create a mathematics-rich environment in the classrooms and around the school. Excellent resources are available at all levels in the school. Initiatives such as the problem of the week are of benefit to the pupils. Lessons are well structured though it is suggested that oral work at the start of lessons should be more broadly based and should include a planned review and revision element. Good assessment practices are evident in all classes.
- Attainment in most of the classes is high and teacher expectations of the pupils reflect this. In most instances, pupils demonstrate their ability to work through assigned tasks. Extending and challenging the problem solving capacity of all pupils should be the focus of planning for Mathematics. A response to this issue might include planned team teaching opportunities at all levels in the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is very good. The school plan for Geography successfully underpins practice. A very good balance is achieved between local, national and international topics. In many classes, the pupils display competent knowledge of geographical facts relating to the physical features of Ireland. The pupils spoke competently about completed work. Significant and worthwhile emphasis is placed on the presentation of project work to audiences within the school. The teachers are commended for successfully integrating work in Geography with other areas of the curriculum. A very good array of resources is provided to support work in this area.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils in the school is very good. The pastoral care of pupils is excellent. There is a strong sense of teachers working to ensure the most appropriate interventions for pupils are provided. A very good sense of collaboration between class teachers and support teachers is evident and the focus on early intervention is entirely appropriate. Initiatives such as the socialisation programme add positively to the overall experience of the pupils.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is commendable. This area is very well resourced and pupils who require extra support receive it as appropriate in a well planned and monitored manner. Consultations with parents are very good. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are provided for specific pupils and the format for these is good. It is advised that the targets included in these plans are as specific as possible.
- The newly-established special classes for children on the autistic spectrum (The Meadow) are working effectively. Good emphasis is placed on exploiting potential for integration and there is very good evidence of the impact of planning for these pupils. In developing the unit, consideration should be given to a number of issues which will arise; including the integration of boys into the school and maximising the work schedules for pupils.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. In that regard, the work of the Parents' Association is commendable. Parents play an active and valuable role in the life of the school.

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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 Good Counsel Girls' National School would like to thank the reporting inspector and his colleagues for the courtesy and respect afforded to our school community, as well as their professionalism during this process of whole school evaluation. The Board welcomes the report, which we consider to be a fair and accurate reflection of the excellent work that goes on in our school, as well as the acknowledgement that the school is a vibrant and welcoming place, where pupils engage positively in well planned learning facilities. The Board appreciates the affirmation of the following areas of strength

- The professionalism and commitment of the pupils
- The pastoral care of the pupils
- The quality of self evaluation, the process of whole-school planning and reflection
- The self confident, highly motivated and enthusiastic learners
- The effectiveness of the Board of Management
- The quality of the home-school partnership, where parents play an active and valuable role

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 two specific areas of further development that are identified in the report. These are also identified by the school, through our own school self-evaluation process. A programme of development has begun to further address these areas in our school improvement plan over the next few years.