

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Paul's JNS
Ayrfield, Dublin 13.
Uimhir rolla: 19471U

Date of inspection: 20 October, 2011



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

1. Introduction

St. Paul's Junior National School caters for pupils from junior infants to second class. It is located in Ayrfield, Dublin 13. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Current enrolment is 233 pupils and attendance levels are very good. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 enthusiastic board of management.
- The school principal and in-school management team provide purposeful organisational, pastoral and curricular leadership.
- Whole school curricular plans are of a very good quality.
- The school environment is very stimulating, with a broad selection of resources available to support the delivery of the curriculum.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good, testament to the school's recent concerted drive to develop standards in this area.
- Lessons are engaging and stimulating, being underpinned by the use of a variety of methodologies and the creative use of activities.
- Teachers are very interested in the progress of their pupils, engaging with them in a very affirming and nurturing manner.
- The quality of pupils' work and the manner in which teachers monitor this work is of a high standard.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is provided in a very warm and engaging manner.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In some cases, there is potential for greater emphasis on creative writing.
- The school recently embarked on an in-class support programme involving the special education team. It is recommended that the school examine strategies to provide greater coherence between the reading, writing and oral language stations and also that a wider range of reading texts be used.

3. Quality of School Management

- The school is managed by a committed and enthusiastic board of management. Meetings are held regularly. Minutes are recorded carefully. School accounts are certified on a yearly basis. The board actively concerns itself with providing a well-maintained and well-resourced school for its pupils. The board stated that it is satisfied with the way in which the curriculum is taught and with the achievement of the pupils.
- The school is presented in a very colourful, stimulating and tidy manner. It has a very good selection of resources to support the implementation of the curriculum. Members of the school staff regularly engage in professional development courses and share best practice.

- The management of pupils is of a high standard. Effective and efficient organisational practices have been established. Pupils are very content and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. Teachers interact with pupils in a very warm, affirming and nurturing manner.
- The school is led by a committed and dynamic principal who approaches her work in a very organised and strategic manner. She closely monitors pupil achievement and aims to provide a comprehensive and stimulating educational experience for all the pupils. She is ably supported by the in-school management team which operates in a collaborative and focused manner. It meets regularly in both formal and informal settings. Duties are reviewed frequently. The team liaises with school staff to provide purposeful curricular, organisational and pastoral leadership.
- The school communicates regularly with parents and the community through a variety of means which include newsletters, text-a-parent services, memos, the parents' association and the school's website. Parent-teacher meetings are held each year and all pupils receive a written progress report. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved in the life of the school, with the parents' association playing an important role in a number of school events, activities and initiatives.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole school planning is good. The school adopts a deliberate and collaborative approach to such planning. Well constructed organisational plans have been created. Detailed curricular plans have also been constructed which are comprehensive and focused. Both organisational and curricular plans are reviewed on a regular basis, with such reviews being guided by the school's self-evaluation processes. It is recommended that the school develop a policy on supporting pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is also recommended that all school plans and policies contain a date of review and ratification.
- All teachers provide both short-term and long-term planning. These plans are carefully constructed and provide a clear and progressional outline of lesson content. Teachers are commended for the creative and diligent manner in which they use and sometimes design resources to support lesson delivery. All teachers complete monthly progress reports.
- 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

- Múintear an Ghaeilge go cumasach sa scoil seo. Cothaítear suim na ndaltaí sa teanga trí cheachtanna a chur i láthair go bríomhar. Bunaítear an t-ábhar foghlama ar théamaí a bhaineann le saol agus timpeallacht na bpáistí. Baineann na hoidí leas fóinteach as fearas agus acmhainní éagsúla le béim inmholta ar drámaíocht agus obair bheirte. Múintear roinnt mhaith rainn bheaga, amhráin agus, i roinnt de na ranganna, scéalta beaga do na daltaí. Baintear leas éifeachtach as cluichí teanga freisin chun foclóir daltaí a leathnú agus chun comhrá a scafláil. Cuirtear béim shuntasach ar chomhrá neamhfhoirmiúil le linn an lae. Múintear an léitheoireacht go rialta i rang a dó agus tugtar

roinnt mhaith cleachtadh do dhaltáí píosaí simplí a scríobh faoina saol agus a dtimpeallacht.

- *Irish is taught competently in this school. The pupils' interest in the language is stimulated by presenting lessons in a lively manner. Learning content is grounded in themes which relate to the life and environment of the pupils. Teachers make practical use of various resources with commendable emphasis on drama and pair work. A good selection of short rhymes, songs and, in some classes, short stories are taught. Language games are also used effectively to broaden the pupils' vocabulary and to scaffold conversation. Significant emphasis is placed on the use of informal Irish during the day. Reading is taught regularly in second class and pupils are given good practice at writing simple pieces about their lives and surroundings.*
- The school adopts a deliberate and focused approach to the development of the pupils' English language skills. Lessons make appropriate provision for oral language development. Collaborative learning and pair work are used to good effect. The school adopts a multi-pronged approach to the development of pupils' reading skills. The use of class, group, CAPER (Children and Parents Enjoy Reading), paired reading programmes, information and communication technology (ICT) and supplementary readers coupled with a strong focus on early intervention, word-attack skills and phonological awareness, all serve to develop the pupils' reading skills and their enjoyment of books. As part of its focus on developing pupils' literacy skills, the school recently embarked on an in-class support programme involving the special education team. In the further development of this commendable initiative, it is recommended that the school examine strategies to provide greater coherence between the reading, writing and oral language stations and also that a wider range of reading texts be used. The school is commended on its very stimulating school library and on the manner in which it is presented as a print-rich environment. Pupils reveal a keen interest in story and read with fluency and confidence. Overall, teachers make good provision for comprehension work. In some cases, there is potential for greater emphasis on creative writing. Pupils clearly enjoy writing and engage readily in the writing process: in this context, some teachers should reconsider the current approach to the teaching of formal grammar. Pupils display a keen interest in poetry which is very well celebrated throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Teachers carefully and consistently monitor pupil progress. The school and individual classrooms are very well presented as maths-rich environments. Lessons have a definite structure and make effective use of resources, most notably information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers make creative provision for linking lesson content to the life experience of the pupils and provide them with suitable opportunities for problem-solving. Collaborative learning exercises and concrete resources provide pupils with an active and engaging forum for developing their communication, reasoning and problem-solving skills. Pupils are provided with suitable opportunities to use mathematical language. The school has provided *Maths for Fun* activities and station teaching activities in a number of classes to provide focused development of specific mathematical skills.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Visual Arts is of a high standard. A broad and balanced programme is delivered, with suitable provision for looking and responding to art as well as making it. High quality examples of the pupils' work are attractively displayed in classrooms and on corridors. Lessons make creative and effective provision for guided discovery and for the use of varied stimuli. Resources, which include ICT, are used purposefully and creatively. Lesson content is frequently and creatively integrated with other curricular areas, notably Mathematics and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education.

- Teachers approach their work in an enthusiastic and lively manner, actively striving to provide pupils with a stimulating and engaging learning experience. Lessons have very good structure, with resources and varied teaching methods used effectively. Pupils show interest and pride in their work, applying themselves to tasks and activities with vigour. Pupils' work is well presented and is carefully monitored. Data from the parents' questionnaires indicate that a very high proportion of them think 'teaching is good in the school' and that their 'child is doing well in school'.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Guided by a detailed whole-school policy and teachers' long and short-term plans, pupils with specific educational needs or those in need of learning support are catered for effectively in this school. Individual Pupil Learning Profiles (IPLPs) and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are constructed. Support sessions are engaging, serving to stimulate pupils and to provide them with interesting activities. In some cases, there is potential for more refined and specific skill-based activities including the use of play-based learning approaches. Teachers make suitable use of resources. Support is provided either in class or by withdrawing pupils. Pupils are selected for support following consultation with class teachers and the examination of a range of assessment data. There is potential for the greater use of diagnostic tests to determine the specific needs of pupils with such data enabling the provision of a more differentiated programme.

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