

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

**Our Lady Immaculate Senior National School,
Darndale, Dublin 17
Uimhir rolla: 19524P**

Date of inspection: 7 November 2013



1. Introduction

Our Lady Immaculate Senior National School is a co-educational school catering for pupils from third to sixth class. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Current enrolment is 238 pupils. The school is proactive in monitoring and encouraging attendance. 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. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and five 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 school is managed by a dynamic and strategic board.
- The school principal works successfully with the in-school management team and colleagues to promote a warm and nurturing school climate and to empower staff to engage with educational initiatives and change.
- Teachers skilfully manage and motivate pupils.
- Lessons are well structured, being delivered in a lively and engaging manner.
- Pupils are very interested and content in their work, applying themselves to tasks with pride and enthusiasm.
- Pupils display a keen interest in reading and writing.
- Support for pupils is delivered in a nurturing and engaging manner.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Ní mór níos mó béime a chur ar fhorbairt chéimniúil scileanna teanga na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge. *Greater emphasis should be placed on the sequential development of pupils' language skills in Irish.*
- Provision for mathematics should make greater use of problem-solving activities, discussion and linkage.
- Duties attaching to posts of responsibility should be regularly reviewed and formal meetings of the in-school management team should be considered.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. Meetings are held regularly and minutes are recorded. School accounts are certified. The board actively

promotes an inclusive and productive school environment, managing resources in a strategic manner.

- The school principal successfully promotes a warm and nurturing school climate. He effectively empowers colleagues to engage with change and initiatives aimed at further developing educational standards. The principal is supported by an in-school management team who work collaboratively with colleagues to promote specific curricular initiatives and to support the day-to-day management of the school. It is recommended that duties be regularly reviewed and be more clearly delineated across the domains of pastoral, organisational and curricular responsibilities. While the in-school management team meet informally, it is recommended that consideration be given to the scheduling of formal meetings on a regular basis.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school has amassed a broad variety of stimulating resources to support curriculum implementation. School staff has engaged in a wide range of professional development courses. Ancillary staff makes a valuable contribution to the school.
- The school uses a broad range of approaches to communicate with parents. The responses to the parent questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate very high levels of parental satisfaction with teaching in the school.
- The quality of management of pupils is very high. Teachers skillfully manage and motivate pupils, interacting with them in a very courteous and respectful manner. Pupil behaviour during the evaluation was excellent. They are very polite, content and cooperative. The school's student council makes a significant contribution to promoting pupil responsibility and involvement in school matters. Pupil responses to the questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that a very high proportion of them think that their 'teacher explains things clearly'.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- High quality school planning and school self-evaluation practices are in place. A broad range of focused and well constructed organisational policies have been devised. It is recommended that the school policy on behaviour make more detailed reference to suspension and expulsion. Curricular policies are detailed and comprehensive in scope. The school engages in a wide range of self-evaluation practices. Strategic targets have been agreed and are underpinned by a wide range of actions and initiatives.
- All teachers write long and short-term plans which are of a high quality. Content is clearly outlined in a progression manner. Very high quality practises involving content overviews and the use of daily planning notes were noted during the evaluation. In some cases, planning should make more specific reference to methodologies and differentiation. It is recommended that the school develop a common approach to recording and monitoring progress with curriculum implementation on a monthly basis.
- 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

- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc agus na foghlama i nGaeilge measartha. Déanann na hoidí gach iarracht an teanga a chur chun cinn. Baintear úsáid éifeachtach as fearais éagsúla chun foclóir nua a mhiniú agus chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Cuirtear béim chuí agus chruthaitheach ar mhodhanna éagsúla teagaisc agus ar chluichí teanga. Glacann na daltaí páirt fhothmhar sna ceachtanna. Labhraíonn cuid de na daltaí go hábailte faoi ábhair éagsúla, ach ní mór níos mó béime a chur ar fhorbairt chéimniúil scileanna teanga na ndaltaí. Léann agus scríobhann cuid de na daltaí go hábailte. Ní mór níos mó béime a chur ar shaorscríbhneoireacht agus ar théacsanna breise léitheoireachta. Moltar modh an aistriúcháin a sheachaint.
- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is reasonable. Teachers make every effort to promote the language. Various resources are used effectively to explain new vocabulary and to stimulate pupil interest. Appropriate and creative emphasis is placed on various teaching methodologies and on language games. Pupils partake in lessons enthusiastically. Some of the pupils speak ably on various topics, but additional emphasis should be placed on the sequential development of the pupils' language skills. Some of the pupils read and write ably. Greater emphasis should be placed on creative writing and on additional reading texts. It is recommended that translation methods be avoided.
- The overall quality of teaching in English is high, with lessons following a definite structure. As there have been fluctuations in pupils' progress in reading, the school has implemented a structured reading and writing initiative over the past three years. This programme is paying clear dividends in terms of stimulating pupil interest in reading and in developing their writing skills. Very high quality provision is in place for the use of the writing process across a range of genres. The school has a very well stocked library and provides the pupils with reading material across a wide range of genres. While it will take time to establish the effectiveness of the new reading and writing initiative, the focused teaching and the structured approach taken to its implementation are commended. While the literacy initiative does make provision for oral language development, additional emphasis on the development of oral language across all curricular areas is recommended.
- The quality of teaching in Mathematics is high. Generally, pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject and are actively engaged in lessons. Suitable emphasis is placed on mental arithmetic. The school and individual classrooms are well presented as mathematics-rich environments. Teachers make effective and creative use of concrete resources. Lesson content is typically connected to the pupils' life experience and environment. In some instances, there is potential for greater linkage and integration, for more problem solving activities and for greater collaborative talk and discussion. Generally, assessment practices are good. A number of teachers make very effective use of self-assessment practices. There is scope for the extension of such practice on a school-wide basis. It is recommended that ability grouping be used judiciously.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Drama is very good. Pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons. A range of dramatic experiences are provided. Teachers employ a variety of suitable strategies such as improvisation, mime and hot seating. Pupils are provided with opportunities to use space and objects imaginatively and to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas. Drama is integrated effectively with a number of subject areas.
- The overall quality of teaching in the school is high. Lessons are delivered in a lively and engaging manner, making good use of a range of methodologies. Resources are used in a creative and purposeful manner providing pupils with active and hands-on learning experiences. Overall, good assessment practises are in place, with pupils' work being systematically monitored and corrected in the main. Pupils reveal a keen interest in their

learning and apply themselves to tasks with enthusiasm and pride. Pupils' written work and engagement in lessons indicates that overall, they are making good progress in their learning.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is high. The school works collaboratively and earnestly to address the needs of pupils. Using a range of assessment and diagnostic tests, pupils in need of support are identified early and appropriate programmes are put in place. Support is provided in numeracy and literacy using a combination of both in-class and withdrawal techniques. In the further development of such supports, it is recommended that additional in-class support paradigms be developed. The quality of planning is good. Clear individual education plans (IEPS) and group learning plans are devised. While IEPs are discussed with parents, it is recommended that parents receive a copy of the IEP. Group learning programmes and IPLPs are in place with due regard for the prioritised needs of pupils. In some cases, targets should be more specific and there is potential for greater inclusion of numeracy objectives. Overall, assessment practises are good. In some cases, there is potential for more tracking of pupil progress and for the greater use of pupil self-assessment practices.
- Pupils engage enthusiastically in well structured support sessions which are delivered in a very affirming, lively and nurturing manner. Resources are used to very good effect with a very good focus on active learning experiences. Content is purposefully linked to the pupils' life experiences and environment.
- The school benefits from the support of a home school community liaison teacher. High quality strategic planning is in place. A wide range of programmes and initiatives have been developed to empower parental involvement in the school and to assist them in supporting their children's learning. Current endeavours to reinstate a parents' association are commended.
- The school completion programme effectively complements the school's implementation of its Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.
- The school has a well-developed Early Start Programme in place. Classrooms are well resourced and suitable play-based learning activities are provided. Pupils engage enthusiastically in learning activities which are presented in a structured and fun manner. Staff has engaged in suitable professional development to support the programme. Going forward, it is recommended that teachers systematically record learning and language development.

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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 report was felt to be fair and balanced. The observations were comprehensive and staff was happy that good work was noted and remarked upon. Recommendations were deemed to be fair and practical.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Gaeilge: Teachers have been surveyed and a group formed to plan implementation of recommendations.

Mathematics: A subgroup has formed and met to consider improvements, resources etc. Tasks have been allocated and the group will report to staff.

Posts of Responsibility: Formal meeting is scheduled where review of posts will be considered.