

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Kilian's Junior National School  
Castleview  
Tallaght  
Dublin 24  
Uimhir rolla: 19556F**

**Date of inspection: 30 September 2010**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Kilian's Junior National School is a fourteen-teacher co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It caters for pupils from junior infants to second class. There are 226 pupils enrolled at the school. The school has effective attendance strategies in place. Pupil attendance is very good with a small number of pupils absent for more than 20 days. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- There is excellent leadership in the school. A climate of purposeful cohesion has been successfully created.
- School self-evaluation is well advanced in the school. The willingness of staff to engage in self-reflection and professional dialogue about their practice is praiseworthy.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The pupils are confident, well behaved and enthusiastic about their learning. The school has made very good progress in raising literacy and numeracy standards over the past three years.
- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is of a high standard.
- The quality of the school environment is very good. The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard.
- There is excellent management and use of resources at the school. The quality of the display work in the classrooms and around the school is particularly praiseworthy.
- The standard of whole-school planning is high. It reflects the school's long-standing engagement with purposeful whole-school planning. The planning process is highly collaborative involving board members, teachers and parents.
- Commendable support is given to the school by the board of management and parents.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Teachers should use the outcomes of assessment to plan differentiated programmes of work to meet the variety of learning needs.
- There should be more widespread use of group and individual instruction by class teachers.

### **3. Quality of School Management**

- The school has an effective and supportive board of management. It is properly constituted. Clear roles are assigned to board members. The board communicates with the wider school community through the issuing of regular newsletters and its parent representatives on the board. School policies are developed collaboratively, ratified and reviewed.
- There is exemplary leadership in the school. It is positive, constructive and inclusive thereby engendering a climate of purposeful cohesion.
- The school atmosphere is orderly, calm and welcoming. The school building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard and provide a safe and stimulating environment for all. The quality of the display work in the classrooms and around the school is particularly praiseworthy. A wide range of teaching resources is available and used very effectively by the teachers to support pupils' learning.
- The pupils are managed effectively at all class levels. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are positive. The pupils are very well behaved.
- The principal, staff and board cultivate positive relationships with the school community. The school communicates effectively with parents through regular newsletters, memos and pupils' homework journals. Report cards are sent to parents each year. Annual formal parent teacher meetings are held. Commendable efforts have been made to communicate with EAL parents. The school has compiled useful information packs in different languages. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that the school is welcoming of parents. The school has an active parents' association. Members of the association are involved in fundraising activities and assist in a range of school-based events.

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

- Whole-school planning is of a high standard. The planning process is highly collaborative involving board members, teachers and parents. Teachers of similar class grades, along with members of the special education team (SET), plan collaboratively on a fortnightly basis. The school's organisational policies are clear and informative. Comprehensive curriculum plans for all areas have been developed. A schedule for review of all school policies and plans is in place. All teachers have a copy of the school plan and use it to inform their classroom planning. Teachers complete an agreed whole-school template for their individual planning.
- School self-evaluation is well advanced. The board and staff have engaged in an analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. Consequently a revised charter has been developed. The willingness of the staff to engage in self-reflection and professional dialogue about their practice is a praiseworthy feature of this school.

### **Child protection policy and procedures**

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

- Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus tá bá ag na daltaí don teanga. Úsáidtear í go neamhfhoirmiúil i rith an lae. Cothaítear suim na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge trí ceachtanna a chur i láthair go bríomhar agus go spreagúil. Múinteann an foclóir agus na frásaí nua go coinsiasach. Léiríonn na daltaí caighdeán maith sa Ghaeilge labhartha agus canann siad rainn sa teanga le brí agus le spioraid. Tá dul chun cinn maith le sonrú ag na daltaí sinsearach i bhfoglaim scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta.

*A positive attitude to Irish is successfully promoted and the pupils are well disposed to the language. It is used informally throughout the day. The pupils' interest in Irish is promoted through the presentation of lively and stimulating lessons. Explicit provision is made for the teaching of new vocabulary and phrases. The pupils demonstrate good standards of spoken Irish and sing purposefully and spiritedly in the language. The older pupils are making good progress in acquiring reading and writing skills.*

- In the teaching of English teachers display effective communication skills and present their lessons in a highly structured and clear manner. The overall emphasis is on teacher-directed, whole-class instruction. The school has an agreed phonics programme which is implemented consistently. The pupils demonstrate good word-attack skills. English reading is primarily taught through whole-class teaching using a class reader. Ability-groups for reading should be put in place. Shared reading between parent and child is promoted. In the strand of writing the focus is on correct spelling and the proper use of conventions and neatness. The standard of the pupils' functional writing is very good. Pupils' writing skills should be further developed through the provision of more opportunities to engage in independent writing.
- The school has achieved steady progress in improving standards in Mathematics. The teachers succeed in developing an interest in and enjoyment of Mathematics among pupils. There is good emphasis on the teaching of mathematical language. Lessons are structured appropriately. Talk and discussion are central to the lessons and content is explained clearly. Pupils display good competency in Mathematics. They carry out mathematical operations with proficiency and discuss approaches used to solve basic problems with confidence. In-class support in numeracy is provided by members of the special education team (SET). This is primarily a team-teaching approach with effective use of scaffolding techniques to develop the pupils' understanding. This good practice should now be extended to include the formation of ability groups for Mathematics and the implementation of targeted programmes of work.
- Drama is taught effectively throughout the school as a discrete subject and as a methodology to teach other subject areas. Pupils examine feelings through nursery rhymes and stories and they create dialogues for these characters. They explore and assimilate experiences in groups, in pairs and in role. There is adequate talk and discussion before, during and to conclude drama lessons. The content is appropriate to the class level and full participation is both encouraged and facilitated. There is good use of the environment, collaborative learning, and story and mime in the teaching of this curriculum area. Drama contracts have been produced and pupils display high levels of engagement at each class level.
- The pupils' learning is greatly enhanced by the high quality, print-rich displays around the school. Well-structured lessons are effectively delivered by all teachers. The overall emphasis is on whole-class instruction with some group and pair work, and use of games. The school is commended for its well-established practice of in-class support. It is recommended that the full potential of this strategy to enhance the learning of all pupils be further explored. An overwhelming majority of parents indicated in questionnaire responses that they were happy with the school, the quality of the teaching and their children's learning. Teachers now need to extend the provision for paired activities and collaborative group tasks for pupils and plan differentiated programmes of work to meet the variety of learning needs among them.

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

- The school provides high-quality support for SEN pupils and for EAL pupils. Strategies such as talk and discussion, direct teaching of concepts and teacher modelling are used effectively by teachers in all settings. The lessons are very well structured and tailored to the pupils' needs. The quality of the teachers' planning in support settings is very good. There is an agreed, highly collaborative approach to the development of individual pupil learning programmes (IPLPs). Specific targets are set and these are reviewed regularly.
- There is good practice in relation to assessment of pupil progress. Teacher observation and teacher-designed tasks and tests are used to monitor progress. Standardised tests in English and Mathematics are administered to pupils from senior infants upwards. The principal analyses the standardised test results carefully and reports trends to staff. The school has made very good progress in improving literacy and numeracy standards over the past three years. In SEN and EAL settings assessment data is carefully used by the teachers to inform their planning. It is recommended that teachers in mainstream classes extend the use of assessment data to plan differentiated programmes of work.

*Published April 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 staff of St. Kilian's Junior School wish to commend the Inspectorate on their professionalism and courtesy during their visit to our school, and on the comprehensive and thorough evaluation leading to this Report.

We welcome the affirmation in the Report of the commitment and dedication of the Board, Principal, teachers, assistants, and ancillary staff to our school. We also appreciate the acknowledgement in the Report of the excellent planning, leadership, teaching and learning which together form a vital part of our school's success. The Board and staff are pleased to note that the school environment, buildings and grounds were acknowledged in the Report as praiseworthy. We were very pleased with the overwhelmingly positive responses which parents gave in their feedback. Our school enjoys very positive relationships with our parent body and our parish, both of whom are very supportive to all school developments.

We wish to thank the Inspectorate for this very positive report and believe that the opportunities which this process gave us all to self-reflect were extremely beneficial and purposeful.

#### **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 teaching staff is now attempting to extend its use of assessment for learning and planning differentiation.

We are also focussing on more widespread use of group and individual instruction in addition to whole class teaching methodologies.