

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Peter Apostle Junior National School,
Neilstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 195690**

Date of inspection: 21 September 2011



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

1. Introduction

St. Peter Apostle Junior National School is a catholic, co-educational school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. It participates in Band 1 of DEIS, the Department of Education and Skills initiative for educational inclusion. The school hosts two *Early Start* classes. Attendance levels of the 268 pupils are very good due to the successful implementation of the attendance-promotion strategies. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and three support teaching settings. The board of management of the school 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 principal provides outstanding leadership and is supported by a very competent in-school management team.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commendable.
- All teachers skilfully meet the needs of pupils through careful programme planning, team teaching and formative assessment.
- The pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners; they engage in their independent and cooperative tasks confidently.
- The process of school self evaluation and whole-school planning is excellent and contributes significantly to raising standards in literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is a particular strength of the school.
- Home school links and the level of parental involvement in school life are praiseworthy.
- The effective board of management significantly supports the work of the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In the teaching of Irish, it is recommended that the communicative approach be used to ensure that new language exemplars are thoroughly taught and consolidated through pair work and group work.

Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions very effectively in supporting all aspects of the work of the school. It is commended for being well informed with regard to the pupils'

achievements and successes, most notably their continued improvement in literacy and numeracy.

- The principal provides outstanding leadership. Her visionary leadership style is reflected in her deep understanding of the school community and in the promotion of parental involvement. She capably leads pedagogy, empowers teachers and is committed to the pursuit of high standards for all pupils. The very competent in-school management team carry out their curriculum-leadership, organisational and pastoral responsibilities successfully.
- The management of resources is very effective. There is an extensive selection of resources including Information and Communications Technology (ICT) which are expertly utilised to support teaching and learning. Classrooms and communal areas of the school host high quality displays. The school secretary provides invaluable support in carrying out a wide range of duties. The caretaker and cleaning staff ensure that the building is maintained in excellent order.
- The school promotes and facilitates a high level of communication and partnership with parents and the community. It is a welcoming environment where parents are actively encouraged to participate in the life of the school. From *Early Start* onwards newsletters, regular meetings and reports are features of provision. The Parents' Association significantly supports the work of the school through fundraising, supporting school-based educational activities and engagement in policy formation.
- Parents' representatives expressed a high level of satisfaction with the education provision in the school. This is further substantiated by the analysis of questionnaires administered to parents during the evaluation.
- The management of pupils is exemplary. The pupils are very attentive, enthusiastic and well behaved. A positive learning environment that promotes contentment, motivation and achievement is evident. The skilful delivery of the school's behaviour management programme is praiseworthy. The pupils are enabled to develop in a holistic manner through the provision of a wide range of activities for example, dance, violin and sport.

Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school-planning and school self-evaluation process is excellent. This is achieved through regular meetings, consultation, programme coordination and effective review mechanisms. The school plan provides clear guidance on all aspects of curriculum and organisational provision.
- The teachers work collaboratively to prepare very good objectives-based short term plans. These are directly drawn from whole-school curriculum plans. The preparation of long-term class planning by teachers is recommended.
- The process of school self evaluation is well-embedded and impacts significantly on raising standards. The staff engages in detailed analysis of assessment data, target setting, programme planning and review.
- 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.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- In relation to the lessons observed, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commended. The teachers create high quality learning environments, stimulating resources and use physical space in their classrooms effectively. The standard of teacher modelling and teacher instruction during lessons is praiseworthy. There is very successful provision for differentiated group work by all teachers and during team teaching. Very good learning is evident as the pupils work independently and cooperatively in their learning activities.
- Tá caighdeán an teagaisc, na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí leordhóthannach. Úsáideann na h-oidí réimse cuí straitéisí, ina measc tá cluichí, amhráin, puipéid agus gníomhaíochtaí rólghlactha. Canann agus aithrisíonn na daltaí sampla amhrán agus rann go díograiseach. In ainneoin sin ní leagtar a dhóthain béime ar fhorbairt scileanna cumarsáide na daltaí bunaithe ar théamaí an churaclam. Moltar na heiseamláirí teanga nua a mhúineadh go críochnúil agus iad a dhaingniú trí obair bheirte agus grúp obair.
- *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is fair. Teachers use a range of suitable strategies including games, songs, puppets and role play. Pupils can sing and recite a selection of songs and rhymes enthusiastically. Nevertheless, there is insufficient focus on developing the pupils' communication skills based on planned themes. It is recommended that new language exemplars are thoroughly taught and consolidated through pair work and group work.*
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are highly effective. Early-ready skills are taught successfully. From *Early Start* classes onwards the school provides a solid foundation in phonological awareness for pupils. The quality of phonics instruction is very good. The pupils' oral language skills are well developed through language teaching and across the curriculum. Very good samples of the pupils' writing were observed. The *First Steps Writing* programme is taught consistently and effectively at all levels.
- There is excellent teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics. All teachers observed deliver well-paced, highly-structured lessons. Through explicit instruction, differentiated group work, and tailored resources and activities the teachers succeed in meeting the learning needs of all pupils. The recently introduced team teaching model is praiseworthy and leads to high levels of pupil engagement and learning.
- Teaching and learning in Geography are of a high standard. The pupils' early mapping skills are very well developed. They display a very good knowledge of their local environment, families and homes. The teachers provide activity-based learning experiences. These include story, ICT, surveys, fieldtrips and role play.
- Assessment practices are praiseworthy. Consistent formative assessment is complemented by rigorous standardised and diagnostic testing. Of particular note is the teachers' use of class level learning targets, skilful teacher observation and pupil profiles.

Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports for pupils with special education needs is a particular strength of the school. Their learning needs are identified through a range of screening and

diagnostic tests and appropriate early-intervention programmes are put in place. The pupils' education plans are devised collaboratively and outline clear learning targets and teaching strategies. Both in-class and withdrawal support are of a very high quality. The special needs assistants, who are very competent, carry out their duties with skill and dedication.

- An extensive range of literacy and numeracy initiatives to promote parental involvement is facilitated through the *Home School Community Liaison* programme and *School Completion Programme* and the work of teachers. Parents are enabled to support their children's learning in a variety of ways including in-class activities, home-reading packs and participating in annual curriculum days.

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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 B.O.M. of St. Peter the Apostle JNS would like to thank the Inspectors of the D.E.S. for their professionalism, courtesy and overall support in the conducting of the W.S.E. The Board is extremely pleased with the report and is delighted that it affirms the dedication, hard work and commitment of the staff and the wider school community. We acknowledge that the overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement received the highest possible praise, and that there is such an evident high level of communication and partnership with parents and the wider community. We thank the Inspectors for their affirmation and congratulate the Principal and Staff on an outstanding report.

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 Inspectors' recommendation was very constructive. Since our W.S.E. we have formulated an Irish Committee which is now actively engaged in formulating new language exemplars.