

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St Mary's Junior NS, Rowlagh,
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 19575J**

Date of inspection: 4 October 2012



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

1. Introduction

St Mary's Junior NS, Rowlagh, Clondalkin, is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Its current enrolment is 233 pupils. The school's child-centred mission statement is reiterated across school planning and its implementation is evident in the daily life of the school. It participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative and is designated as a Band One urban school. The school is praised for its successes in improving pupils' attendance rates. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and five support teaching settings. 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 board of management and parent body actively support the work of the school.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership for the school.
- Teachers display a deep commitment to their work and embrace new initiatives in the best interests of pupils.
- Pupils' attainments in reading and Mathematics are improving as a result of the effective implementation of agreed whole-school initiatives.
- Supports for pupils are wide ranging and enhance their educational experience.
- A positive school atmosphere pertains and pupils are courteous in their interactions with adults and peers.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Teachers' short-term planning and monthly progress records should be consistently based on specific curriculum learning objectives.
- A structured, curriculum-based oral language programme should be implemented as a matter of priority to enhance pupils' oral language competence.
- The use of play-based learning should be extended within the school.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is good. Members bring a wide range of skills and expertise and give generously of their time to support the school and community. The board is well informed about all aspects of the operation of the school and places a good emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning. It discusses and ratifies policies on an ongoing basis. Going forward, all plans and policies should be signed by the chairperson upon ratification. The board makes a conscientious effort to communicate with the school community and disseminates a comprehensive annual report on its activities.

- The principal provides highly effective leadership for the school. He exhibits good interpersonal skills and nurtures a collaborative relationship with the school community. Commendably, he places high expectations and positive learning experiences at the core of his vision for the school. He is capably supported by the in-school management team who diligently carry out a broad range of duties. The further incorporation of new practices into whole-school curriculum plans, and ongoing review of their implementation, is encouraged. Commendably, post holders report annually on their work to the board of management.
- The management of the school's human and material resources is very good. Staff allocation practices ensure that teachers have opportunities to develop their skills in a variety of settings. Learning environments and recreational areas are clean and stimulating. Judicious use is made of the school's plentiful resources to implement the curriculum. A strong spirit of collaboration and commitment is evident among all staff. Teachers embrace new initiatives and strategies on an ongoing basis in the best interests of pupils.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very successful. Effective systems have been established to foster in-school communication. The school communicates regularly with parents through a range of media and they are kept well informed about school activities and on the progress of their children. Parental involvement is actively promoted and parents are very supportive of the work of the school. In questionnaires, all parents reported that the quality of teaching in the school is good and that they are happy with the school.
- The management of pupils throughout the school is of a very high quality. The positive and affirming school atmosphere supports positive pupil behaviour. Teachers avail of every opportunity to develop pupils' self-esteem and pupils display confidence, courtesy and respect appropriate to their age.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of whole-school organisational and curriculum planning is good. Organisational policies meet legislative requirements and inform the smooth operation of the school. Curriculum plans are in place for all subjects. A framework for the cyclical review of these plans should be developed to ensure they reflect national developments and incorporate existing good practice within the school.
- The process of school self-evaluation and self-reflection is well embedded in school culture. Specific and measurable targets, and a range of actions to support their implementation, are outlined in the school's DEIS action plan. The school is advised to document progress in attaining these actions on an annual basis.
- The overall quality of teachers' planning is good and it is well linked to the structure of the curriculum. It is recommended that short-term planning consistently include appropriate curriculum objectives and record specific provision for differentiation to inform practice. Monthly progress records should clearly record pupils' learning outcomes.
- 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, learning and pupil achievement is commendable. Teachers exhibit well-developed classroom management skills. Lessons are well structured and learning is generally well consolidated. Further sharing of learning intentions at the outset of lessons is recommended. Teachers model language precisely and use questioning effectively. A wide range of teaching methodologies is in use throughout the school and particularly good use is made of station teaching. In some classes, further use of pair work to extend pupils' opportunities to speak is advised. While some use is made of structured play activities in the infant classes, it is recommended that this learning approach be developed and extended to deepen pupils' learning experiences. Teachers use a range of strategies to differentiate teaching and learning activities. Pupils' written work is well monitored. Pupils' engagement is very good and they demonstrate an enjoyment in their learning.
- Provision for assessment in the school is good. A wide range of screening tests, standardised and diagnostic tests are administered annually. Results are analysed to inform teaching and to ascertain pupils' progress. All teachers maintain assessment for learning records and a good emphasis is placed on pupil self assessment. Some teachers' use of checklists based on specific learning objectives across the curriculum, is praiseworthy. Particularly good emphasis is placed on the maintenance of reading records throughout the school.
- Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na teanga. Tá struchtúr cuí ar cheachtanna agus cuirtear béim mhaith ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach i bhformhór na ranganna. Úsáideann oidí modhanna múinte agus acmhainní éagsúla le linn na gceachtanna ar a n-áirítear cluichí, puipéid, rólghlacadh agus obair bheirte. I roinnt ranganna, moltar dul siar a dhéanamh ar an bhfoclóir agus ar na frásaí atá ar eolas ag na daltaí chun leanúnachas agus forbairt san fhoghlaim a chothú. Déantar soláthar maith de rannta, d'fhilíocht agus d'amhránaíocht trasna na scoile.
- *A positive attitude to Irish is nurtured and a good standard is achieved in the teaching and learning of the language. Lessons are structured appropriately and a good emphasis is placed on the communicative approach in the majority of classes. Teachers use a variety of methodologies and resources during lessons including games, puppets, role play and pair work. In some classes, a revision of the vocabulary and phrases that the pupils know is advised to foster continuity and development in the learning. Good provision is made for rhymes, poetry and singing throughout the school.*
- Overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high quality. A whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics and sight vocabulary is successfully implemented. Differentiated reading materials are used throughout the school and pupils' attainments in reading show considerable improvement in recent years. As identified by the school, a structured, curriculum-based oral language programme should be implemented as a matter of priority to enhance pupils' oral language competence. Teachers plan structured opportunities for pupils to write in a range of genres. Pupils enjoy a rich and varied repertoire of poems, rhymes and jingles.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is commendable. A range of oral mathematical activities is employed successfully and on the whole, these develop pupils' concept of number and allow for the consolidation of learning. Lessons contain a valuable blend of explicit teaching, pupil discussion and practical exploration using appropriate resources. The effective use of station teaching and team teaching

provides for the differentiation of pupils' learning experiences. Assessment data show improvements in pupils' attainments from year to year.

- Teaching and learning in Drama is of a high standard. In the teaching observed, good emphasis was placed on warm-up activities and setting the dramatic scene. Teachers employ a range of dramatic approaches such as improvisation, circle activities, still imaging and teacher in role to stimulate pupils' interest. Overall, pupils engage well in dramatic experiences. Opportunities for integration are successfully employed by teachers.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality and co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs is commendable. The staged approach is implemented effectively throughout the school. Overall planning for pupils in receipt of support is good and individual plans are developed collaboratively. In some instances, teachers were advised to ensure targets are specific and that pupils' progress is documented clearly. A wide range of models of provision is in place and these are appropriately flexible to evolve in line with pupils' needs. Teaching observed was encouraging of pupils' self-esteem and employed a wide range of effective methodologies and resources to meet pupils' identified needs. Effective collaboration between classroom teachers and support teachers is evident.
- The highly-committed support team, encompassing the home-school-community-liaison co-ordinator, the support teacher and the school completion team, provides an extensive range of focussed supports to pupils. The range and nature of these supports is impressive and they successfully enhance pupils' educational experiences and outcomes. The care team is well co-ordinated and collaborates effectively with a variety of external agencies.

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