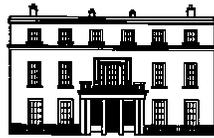


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Naisiúnta Mhuire Sóisearacha
Blakestown Way, Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla: 19605P

Date of inspection: 16 April 2015



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

1. Introduction

Scoil Naisiúnta Mhuire Sóisearacha is located in Blakestown, Dublin 15. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and caters for boys and girls from junior infants to second class. The school participates in the DEIS (*Delivering Equality in Schools*) Band 1 programme and has an Early Start Unit which caters for 30 pupils. The school has an enrolment of 265 pupils and the effective implementation of attendance strategies has significantly improved punctuality in recent years. Over one third of pupils do not have English as a first language. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board. 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.

During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream class settings, in the early start setting and in five support teaching settings.

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 provides very good governance to the school.
- The leadership of the principal is of a very high quality and she demonstrates very effective delegation skills.
- The work of the highly dedicated in-school management team is praiseworthy.
- Pupils are managed in a very supportive and most affirmative manner.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English and Mathematics is of very high quality.
- Teachers are conscientious, reflective practitioners. A sense of whole-school cohesion and reflective practice permeates all aspects of school life.
- The quality of supports provided for pupils with special educational needs is highly commended.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in their learning. Their engagement in learning and their application to tasks is noteworthy.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Further emphasis should be placed on the judicious selection of drama strategies in order to develop the pupils' understanding of the elements of drama.
- Teachers' short-term planning should be consistently informed by the explicit use of curricular objectives.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management provides very good governance to the school. Board members engage in policy formation and strategic planning, are very supportive of staff and capably attend to issues relating to the school's infrastructure. They are also well informed regarding pupils' social and emotional needs, and educational standards in the school.
- The leadership of the principal is of a very high quality. She has an insightful awareness of, and interest in, the pupils as individual learners. She demonstrates very effective delegation skills and is committed to building respectful and open communications with staff, pupils and parents.
- The work of the highly dedicated in-school management team is praised. All members of the team pro-actively undertake curricular leadership responsibilities in addition to pastoral and organisational duties. They diligently adopt a collegial approach to the organisation of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, ensuring that the pupils receive holistic education.
- Resources are managed effectively in the school. The school has prioritised the reassignment of the school library and the development of information and communication technology resources. In order to facilitate optimum usage of resources and the consolidation of pupils' learning, consideration should be given to co-ordinating and balancing the teaching of particular curriculum strands across the school over the course of the year.
- The management of communications within the school community is very good. An open-door policy, and regular formal and informal correspondence with parents contribute to this. Parents are encouraged to participate in both school and class initiatives as well as in courses for parents. Sustaining parental involvement is still a challenge for the school. In the Inspectorate survey, all parents agreed that they feel welcome in the school, their child enjoys school and is doing well at school.
- The pupils are managed in a very supportive and most affirmative manner. Most pupils are very well behaved and they participate enthusiastically in their learning. The teachers actively promote positive reinforcement in order to promote very good pupil behaviour.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Administrative policies are of a very good quality. They reflect legislative requirements, departmental guidance and the school context. All stakeholders are involved in the development and review of school planning. The school has given high priority to enabling parents to contribute their views to policy reviews and a parents' policy advisory committee has recently been established to good effect.
- Effective planning is in place across the curriculum. Some curriculum plans are of particularly good quality as the content to be covered by each class level is clearly defined and closely underpinned by the content, principles and methodologies of the curriculum. This very good practice should be extended to all subject areas of the curriculum in order to facilitate meaningful curriculum review.

- The teachers engage in well-developed, collaborative approaches to planning enabling the effective sharing of expertise and experience among teachers. They are conscientious, reflective practitioners who reflect carefully on how well lessons achieve the intended learning outcomes for pupils and they continually refine their practice in order to best meet the individual needs of their pupils. A sense of whole-school cohesion and reflective practice permeates all aspects of school life. In the Inspectorate survey, all teachers agreed that new teachers are well supported in the school, and colleagues collaborate well and share good practice.
- The process of school self-evaluation (SSE) is progressing well. The school has gathered and analysed data from pupils, parents, staff and relevant school assessments. The school is currently focusing on aspects of English and Mathematics. The school improvement plan is clearly linked to the DEIS action plan. The school's DEIS plan sets out targets which are supported by an appropriate range of actions and resources. The school has devised a range of highly effective strategies to improve pupil attendance and punctuality. A more explicit focus should be placed on the evaluation and refinement of targets each year.
- Individual teacher planning is of good quality overall. In some subject areas, teachers plan according to the programmes or interventions that are being implemented in the school. Teachers should extend the use of curriculum objectives to inform their short-term planning and monthly progress records. More explicit use of curriculum objectives will enable closer monitoring of continuity and progression in curriculum teaching and learning.
- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is highly commended. The teachers plan and deliver stimulating and engaging lessons, characterised by skilful teacher questioning, the competent deployment of a range of methodologies and the effective use of resources, including many innovative resources specially developed by the teachers to enhance the learning experience of the pupils. Almost all pupils participate enthusiastically in their learning. Their engagement in learning and their application to tasks is commended.
- Ar an iomlán, baintear caighdeán maith amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge, agus chonachtas sár chleachtas le linn an mheasúnaithe. Ba chóir an múinteoireacht d'ard-chaighdeán a shamhaltú agus a roinnt ar fud na scoile. Úsáidtear straitéisí foghlama gníomhacha chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Tá foclóir cuí ag na daltaí agus éiríonn leo abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt. Baintear feidhm an-éifeachtach as amhráin agus as rannta chun taithí a thabhairt do na daltaí ar fhuaimneanna agus ar struchtúr na teanga. Léann na daltaí go h-ábailta. B'fhiú, áfach, taithí níos leithne léitheoireachta a chur ar fáil sa Gaeilge.

In general, the teaching and learning of Irish is of a good standard, with some outstanding practice noted during the evaluation. Where the teaching was outstanding, this practice should be modelled and shared across the school. Active-learning approaches are used to teach the language. Pupils have acquired an appropriate vocabulary and succeed in composing simple sentences and asking and answering questions. Very effective use is made of songs and rhymes to give pupils experience of

the sounds and structure of the language. The pupils are able readers. However, a wider reading experience should be provided in Irish.

- In English, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers in the early start setting and in infant classes place valuable emphasis on the pupils' language development and listening skills. The school place significant emphasis on ensuring that all pupils are reading at an ability appropriate level. The majority of pupils read competently and with confidence. All aspects of phonics and grammar are taught very well. Early-intervention strategies and in-class support are having a very valuable impact on pupils' attainments. A whole-school approach to the teaching of genre is embedded and most pupils write competently in a broad range of genres. The teachers place strong emphasis on rhymes, riddles and jingles. There is scope to extend junior pupils' engagement with poetry in a more systematic and progressive manner.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a very high quality. A whole-school approach to the teaching of number and mathematical language is implemented very effectively in all classes. The teachers place worthwhile emphasis on early mathematical learning. They employ collaborative learning methodologies as an integral feature of lessons and they use concrete materials and innovative teacher-made resources to very good effect. Most pupils demonstrate competent usage of mathematical language. In order to extend the pupils' use of mathematical language, further attention should be attributed to pupils' expressing their mathematical thinking and use of strategies. The school's use of mathematical trails, classroom shops and mathematical displays are some of the successful strategies used to connect mathematics with the pupils' real-life experiences. Effective differentiation practices are in operation and in-class support teaching is impacting very well on pupil attainment. Within some of the in-class support groupings, additional provision for differentiation should be considered to extend the learning of all of the pupils.
- In Drama, teaching and learning is of good quality. Drama is used well as a methodology and is integrated effectively with other subjects. The emphasis on the use of role-play in the Early Start setting and the use of socio-dramatic play in *Aistear* in the infant classes is commended. Teachers make good use of story as a stimulus for drama and they use a broad range of strategies in lessons. In some settings, the teachers' use of strategies do not sufficiently introduce and explore tension in the development of the drama lessons. In the teaching of drama, further emphasis should be placed on the judicious selection of dramas strategies in order to develop pupils' understanding of the elements of drama to facilitate their development of new perceptions, insight and knowledge.
- Standardised, screening and diagnostic assessment are administered appropriately. Assessment of the pupils' learning is a regular feature of teachers' practice in all settings. The use of pupil self-assessment strategies is in the early stages of development. The teachers monitor the pupils' work very carefully, and many teachers provide useful guidance to help the pupils to improve their work. The potential impact of pupil self-assessment strategies should be fully optimised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports provided for pupils with special educational needs is highly commended and is characterised by collaborative, well-coordinated and successful approaches to addressing pupils' clearly-defined needs. The special education team's judicious use of withdrawal to complement the in-class support that is provided in all classrooms is very effective. The special needs assistants work purposefully in co-operation with class teachers and support teachers to meet the care and other needs of pupils.

- The sincere and committed approach of the HSCCL teacher in collaboration with the support team, staff, management, and outside agencies ensures that an extensive range of interventions, clubs, courses and programmes is in place for pupils and parents.
- This inclusive, open and welcoming school very successfully creates a culture in which diversity and interculturalism is celebrated.
- Pastoral care provision is of a very high quality. Some staff members have recently undertaken training to support pupil well-being.

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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 Board of Management welcomes this hugely positive report and is thrilled that the inspectors acknowledge the dedication and conscientiousness of all parties involved in the effective management of the school. The Board is pleased with the affirmation of the great work being carried out by all parties within the school. We are delighted the report identifies and confirms the high quality of teaching, learning, pupil achievement and the collegial approach taken to ensuring the pupils receive a holistic education. We are pleased with the manner in which the inspectors commented on the provisions made for the children with special educational needs and with how the reflective practice and sense of whole school cohesion permeates throughout all aspects of school life. The Board of Management would like to commend the commitment and enthusiasm of our teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff, students and parents.

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 staff of Scoil Mhuire Junior acknowledges both recommendations and would like to assure the inspectorate that they will be addressed during the coming school year.