

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St Philip the Apostle Senior National School,
Mountview, Clonsilla, Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla: 19643A**

Date of inspection: 18 April 2012



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

1. Introduction

St Philip the Apostle Senior National School is a co-educational school in Mountview, Dublin 15. Its current enrolment is 318 pupils. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and there is evidence that its mission statement is fostered effectively. The school is commended for the significant improvement achieved in pupils' attendance, in line with its Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. 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 board of management is commended for providing a well-resourced and stimulating learning environment for pupils.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership for the school.
- Teachers are conscientious and display an enthusiastic openness to new initiatives.
- Teachers use a broad range of effective teaching methods and approaches.
- A positive learning atmosphere exists in the school and pupil management is of a very high standard.
- Pupils are respectful and courteous in their relationships and engage enthusiastically in their learning activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should ensure the correct deployment of teachers to mainstream class teaching duties in order to comply with the staffing schedule for DEIS Urban Band One schools.
- Teachers' planning should become further informed by the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and whole-school curriculum plans. Learning outcomes achieved should be recorded in monthly progress records.
- Assessment for learning strategies should be developed to document pupils' learning outcomes more clearly and to inform differentiation across the curriculum.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is good. It is properly constituted and is supportive of the work of the school. Minutes of meetings evidence discussion on a wide range of issues. The board is praised for the high quality of the learning and recreational environments provided for pupils. Certified accounts for 2007-08 were observed during the evaluation and the school is in the process of certifying accounts for subsequent years. At present, a mainstream teacher is deployed as a support teacher. The board should redeploy this teacher to a mainstream class to ensure that class sizes are in line with provisions for DEIS Urban Band One schools.
- The principal provides highly effective leadership for the school. He has an in-depth knowledge of the school community and places a great emphasis on fostering each pupil's potential. All members of the in-school management team have been assigned a broad range of duties and these are carried out competently. The setting and review of annual targets around these duties is commendable.
- The school is very well resourced to implement the curriculum. Corridors and classrooms are visually stimulating and support pupils' learning. The school's policy of using support teachers to cover short-term mainstream class teacher absences should be reviewed. Teachers display a commitment to their work and embrace new initiatives on an ongoing basis. Special-needs assistants and ancillary staff carry out their duties diligently.
- The management of relationships and communications with the school community is good. Parents are kept well informed about school activities and the progress of their children. In questionnaires, parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the operation of the school. Parents are supportive of the work of the school and participate in a range of school initiatives. To develop this further, the establishment of a parents' association should be explored.
- The management of pupils in the school is very effective. A positive school atmosphere is evident and pupils are respectful, courteous and motivated to learn. Initiatives such as the pupil council enable pupils to develop their leadership skills. Questionnaire results indicated that pupils feel safe at and are proud of their school. The holistic education of pupils is enhanced through participation in a wide range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole-school organisational planning is very good. Policies are clearly contextualised to the needs of the school and inform its daily operation. Curriculum planning is of a high quality. The English and Mathematics plans are particularly commended for their comprehensive inclusion of school-based initiatives.
- The process of school self-evaluation and self-reflection is well established. Annual targets are set and reviewed in the school's DEIS action plan. The school's rich data is used well in the setting of targets and incremental progress is being achieved in meeting many targets. The school should consider developing a three-year action plan, outlining longer-term targets, to complement existing short-term action planning.
- All teachers plan consistently to inform their practice but there is scope to develop its quality in most cases. Long-term plans should be more contextualised to the needs of each class and should incorporate whole-school approaches. Short-term planning should include appropriate learning outcomes, learning activities and specific provision for

differentiation. Monthly progress records should record learning outcomes achieved by pupils across the curriculum.

- 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 quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. All teachers exhibit very effective classroom management skills. Teachers model language precisely and use questioning effectively. A variety of well-chosen resources, including information and communications technology (ICT), is used effectively. A very successful blend of methodologies is employed by teachers. While some lessons are differentiated through in-class support, it is recommended that classroom teachers develop this provision across the curriculum to ensure appropriate challenge or support for pupils in their learning. The standard of presentation of written work is very good and is carefully monitored by teachers. Overall, pupils recall aspects of their learning well.
- Good quality provision is made for recording and tracking pupils' progress at a whole-school level. Various good examples of assessment for learning strategies were observed throughout the school, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The further use of assessment for learning strategies to document pupils' progress and to inform differentiation across the curriculum is recommended. A more formal approach to recording provision for pupils at stage one of the continuum of support is advised.
- Cothaítear dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge sa scoil agus ar an mórgóir, tá caighdeán maith á bhaint amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Sonraítear na torthaí foghlama is fearr i gceachtanna a úsáideann modhanna múinte gníomhacha, acmhainní cuí agus an cur chuige cumarsáideach. B'fhiú tuilleadh forbartha a dhéanamh ar an gclár céimnithe sa scoil chun leanúnachas san fhoghlaim a chinntiú. Aithrisíonn agus canann formhór na ndaltaí réimse leathan rainn agus amhráin go muiníneach. Moltar an úsáid a bhaintear as leabhair bheaga i roinnt ranganna chun scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt. Sonraítear roinnt dea-scribhneoireachta sna cóipleabhair agus ar taispeáint sna seomraí ranga.
- *A positive attitude to Irish is nurtured in the school and on the whole, a good standard is achieved in the teaching and learning of Irish. The best learning outcomes are attained in lessons that use active teaching methodologies, appropriate resources and the communicative approach. The school's structured programme should be developed further to ensure progression in learning. The majority of pupils competently recite and sing a wide range of songs and poems. The use of small-format books in some classrooms to develop pupils' reading skills is praiseworthy. Some good written work was observed in copybooks and displayed in classrooms.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is of a high quality. A positive culture of reading is promoted and an effective focus is placed on developing comprehension skills. Most pupils are responsive to questioning and engage confidently in discussions relating to their learning. To enhance current provision for oral language, teachers are advised to plan for and implement a structured, curriculum-based oral language programme. Very good attention is placed on developing pupils' writing skills. Good emphasis is placed on listening to, reading, learning, reciting and responding to poetry.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Pupils are grouped according to ability at each class level based on assessment data. A very good emphasis is placed on mental mathematics. Concepts are clearly explained, good use is made of concrete resources and pupils' skills are developed through appropriate learning activities. Whole-school approaches to developing estimation and problem-solving skills are successfully implemented.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the Visual Arts is commendable. Attractive displays and pupils' portfolios attest to the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum. In addition to making art, pupils are encouraged to look at and respond to their own work, the work of their peers and the work of artists. In order to consolidate pupils' skills, a more systematic approach to the study of major artists should be considered.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality and co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs is good. The team approach to ensuring that each child's educational needs are fulfilled is commendable. Support teachers' planning is comprehensive and pupils' progress is carefully recorded. A good balance is achieved between in-class support and withdrawal. The school is advised to continue refining its approach to in-class support to ensure optimal use of resources. Lessons observed were very well structured, high quality resources were used and there was a focus on identified learning needs. There is evidence of regular collaboration between support and classroom teachers.
- The school completion team and the home-school-community liaison teacher provide a wide range of focussed supports to pupils and families. A holistic dimension to the support provided is evident, with pupils attending the breakfast club before school, receiving a variety of supports in school, and participating in a wide selection of programmes both after school and during holidays. The care team focuses on individual pupils' needs and the school collaborates with a variety of external agencies.

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 of St Philip's SNS are very grateful to the team of inspectors for the courtesy, respect and advice given to the board and staff members during the recent WSE.

We thank you for the acknowledgement of the many aspects of good practice currently in place, the recognition of the pupils' contributions towards the positive learning atmosphere in the school, the appreciation of support from parents and the school community and the commendation of the dedication, commitment and motivation of teachers, special needs assistants and ancillary staff to the stimulating learning environment provided.

We recognise that advice given in your report will further enhance the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement. Consequently the board of management have already set about working on the recommendations and will ensure that every effort is made for their provision.

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

In order to ensure the correct deployment of teachers to mainstream class teaching duties in accordance with the staffing schedule for DEIS Band One schools the board of management have secured funding from the Department of Education and Skills to build three resource rooms and to convert four existing resource rooms into two classrooms. The process is now at planning permission stage.

The recommendations regarding planning and progress records are being put in place and all learning outcomes achieved will be recorded in our revised format for monthly progress records.

Assessment for learning strategies will be further developed to document pupils' learning outcomes and to influence greater differentiation across the curriculum. Required planning for this area is on the agenda for upcoming staff meetings.

The policy of using a support teacher to cover short term mainstream class teacher absences has been discontinued.

The re-establishment of a parents' association is currently being examined by the HSCL coordinator and the board of management.

School accountants are in the process of certifying accounts to the end of the last school year.

Suggestions regarding the subject areas analysed during the WSE will be discussed at all staff planning meetings in the next few months and necessary adjustments will be made.