

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT
St. Ciarán's NS
Hartstown, Clonsilla, Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla: 19644C**

Date of inspection: 10 May 2012



1. Introduction

St Ciarán's NS is a co-educational vertical primary school located in the parish of St Ciarán in Dublin 15. The school has an enrolment of 796 pupils and attendance levels are very high. Under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, a holistic model of education is espoused in the school's mission statement.

During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in twelve mainstream class settings and seven 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 is commended for the high standard and ongoing maintenance of the internal and external facilities of the school.
- Teachers express a commitment to their work and display effective classroom management skills. They capably employ a wide range of methodologies in their teaching.
- Classrooms and circulation areas are visually attractive learning environments.
- A wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities enhances pupils' learning experiences.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The teachers should place greater emphasis on differentiating learning programmes to ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged and that those less able are supported in their learning.
- Two teachers should be redeployed to mainstream classes to ensure compliance with staffing arrangements for primary schools.
- The teaching programme should be more closely focused on achieving the learning outcomes outlined in the curriculum.
- Whole-school curriculum planning and individual classroom planning should be contextualised to provide clearer guidance for programme delivery.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management displays commitment to the administration of the school and is commended for the high standard and ongoing maintenance of the internal and external

facilities of the school. School accounts are appropriately audited. Currently, two mainstream teachers are deployed in support roles, which have a consequent impact resulting in larger than average class sizes. These teachers should be deployed to mainstream classes to achieve compliance with staffing arrangements for primary schools (*Circular 7/2012*).

- The principal has been appointed recently, having served as an administrative deputy principal in the school for a number of years. He has developed effective and supportive links within the school and with the wider community. The duties of the in-school management team are being reviewed. It is advised that the roles of individual team members should have a strong focus on the development of whole-school approaches to curriculum implementation and review.
- The school is resourced very well. Classrooms and circulation areas provide attractive, stimulating and well-ordered learning environments. The ancillary staff contributes effectively to the operation of the school. The board is supportive of teachers' continuing professional development. To systematically manage opportunities for all teachers to work in a variety of settings and in a manner to meet the evolving needs of the school, the staff rotation policy should be extended to all settings.
- Parents are supportive of many initiatives within the school and parent responses to questionnaires indicate that they are satisfied with the work of the school. The general parent body have no formal role in policy formulation or review. It is timely for the board to give every encouragement and support to the establishment of a parents' association within the school.
- Pupils' holistic development is facilitated through their participation in a diverse range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils are well behaved. Courteous and respectful relationships are evident between pupils and their teachers and a high number of pupils indicate that they feel safe within their class.
- Suitable home-school communication strategies are in place and parents report that they are satisfied with the opportunities available to discuss their children's progress. Further development and frequent updating of the school's website is advised.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Well-devised organisational policies are successful in contributing to the efficient management of the school.
- Plans have been devised for all curricular areas. However, there is scope to develop the quality of whole-school curriculum plans to provide clearer guidance to teachers on whole-school approaches to the implementation of the curriculum.
- The process of school-self evaluation is at an early stage. The school has frequently availed of the assistance of the support services in this regard. To progress school priorities, the development of the school's literacy and numeracy strategy should focus on the setting of specific targets and whole-school approaches in their achievement.
- Teachers provide collaborative long-term plans. There is scope to contextualise these to the needs of each class on an annual basis. Short-term planning should also document clearer learning objectives, differentiation strategies and skills development specific to each individual setting.

- 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 and learning is good overall. Teachers are commended for their competent classroom management skills and for their use of a broad range of teaching methodologies. It is notable that *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is being embraced enthusiastically in a beneficial manner. Pupils' work is corrected frequently and displays of the work are worthy of high praise. While lessons are differentiated for some pupils through in-class support in literacy and numeracy, it is recommended that teachers plan for and implement specific differentiation strategies to support or challenge specific cohorts of pupils as appropriate.
- Teachers are diligent in the assessment of pupils' progress. Initial steps in a review of current assessment practice have commenced and outcomes should underpin the updating of the existing school policy. Standardised assessment data is recorded in graph form. Fluctuation of patterns from year to year should be further interpreted and closer analysis of the available data should be used to identify and develop whole-school approaches to programme delivery and differentiation strategies.
- Tá caighdeán na múinteoirreachta agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge inghlactha. Úsáideann na hoidí modhanna éifeachtíúla agus áiseanna cruthaitheachta chun na daltaí a spreagadh. I ranganna áirithe, tá roinnt rann agus dán á n-aithris ag na daltaí go taitneamhach. Moltar an úsáid rialta a bhaineann na múinteoirí as an nGaeilge i rith na gceachtanna. Bhí cuid mhaith daltaí ábalta abairtí simplí a úsáid ach sonraíodh easpa leanúnachas agus forbairt ar scileanna fíorchumarsáide na ndaltaí ó rang go rang. Moltar don fhoireann aire a dhíriú ar ionchur teanga nua a roghnú, ar struchtúir teanga a theagasc ag gach leibhéal agus é a cheachtadh i rith tréimhse chumarsáide struchtúrtha an cheachta. Moltar freisin clár céimníthe a leagan amach do gach rangleibhéal agus athbhreithniú a dhéanamh go córasach ar an gcur i bhfeidhm ó rang go rang.
- The standard of teaching and learning in Irish is acceptable. Teachers use effective methodologies and creative resources to enthuse pupils. Pupils in particular classes recite some rhymes and poems with enjoyment. Teachers are praised for their regular use of Irish during the lessons. Many pupils were able to use simple sentences but a lack of continuity and progression in pupils' communication skills from class to class was noted. It is recommended that teachers ensure that new language input is selected, that language structure is taught at every class level and practised during a structured communication period of the lesson. It is also recommended that an incremental programme of work is devised for all class levels and that a systematic review of its implementation is undertaken from class to class.*
- Appropriate provision is evident in the teaching and learning of English. Teachers model language appropriately and extend pupils' thinking through effective questioning. The systematic and incremental implementation by all teachers of the oral language objectives from the curriculum and a broader response to poetry is recommended. Current reading-promotion strategies include successful phonics instruction and pupils have access to a wide variety of suitable reading material. While some pupils read fluently and with good expression, a more challenging programme for higher achieving pupils is advised. A whole-school approach to a wider range of comprehension strategies is also advised. Pupils have regular opportunities to write in a number of genres. A whole-school planned approach to the development of genres is recommended.

Purposeful print rich environments are evident in many settings. This good practice should be emulated by all teachers. The consistent implementation by all teachers of the schools' own policy on penmanship and presentation is also advised.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is of a high standard. Teachers place a commendable focus on the teaching of mathematical language and the use of oral mental mathematics activities in most lessons. A variety of strategies is in use to support teaching and learning. Lessons presented during the evaluation were well structured and well paced. Pupil engagement was very good and learning outcomes for many pupils are good. A whole-school approach to problem solving is recommended.
- Adequate provision is evident in the teaching and learning of Science. A number of co-curricular programmes underpin the provision for Science and teachers have access to a broad range of suitable resources. Active learning methodologies are evident during lessons. Pupils' ideas are beneficially used and good quality displays showcase their learning activities. There is scope to enhance this provision through engagement with more open-ended, problem-focused tasks and aligning the provision with curriculum-based objectives. Further opportunities for fair-testing and designing and making are also recommended.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- There is good quality provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). In delivering support, teachers make creative use of a wide range of teaching approaches with commendable emphasis on the use of concrete resources. Intervention approaches, comprising a balanced combination of withdrawal and in-class team-teaching, are beneficially employed. To optimise the resources available to the school and in line with recent discussion in the school, it is recommended that the planning, organisation and management of support provision be more effectively co-ordinated on a whole-school basis to address the additional needs of pupils in a cohesive manner.
- The school is proactive in supporting instances of disadvantage. A variety of strategies also provide inclusive support for a culturally diverse pupil population. The development of a policy on interculturalism is now advised.

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. Ciaran's N.S. would like to thank all the Inspectorate for their Evaluation report.

The Board would like to make the following points in relation to the recommendation concerning two teachers being redeployed to mainstream positions:

The school will be losing a teacher this coming year as the overall numbers have decreased

In two years the school will lose another teacher due to a further decrease in numbers because 4 streams of 6th classes will be leaving the school and the normal projected intake in Junior Infants is 3 classes.

In these times of recession the Board is conscious of the financial burden on the school community. It is also conscious that prudence is required in spending monies raised by the local community in these more difficult times. Therefore the Board needs to be reasonably sure that any local investment must be in building projects that will have a long-term benefit for the school. The Board does not see this benefit at the present time for the reasons outlined above.

In order to make a more informed decision the Board will await the results of a parish survey it will undertake in January 2013 to ascertain the potential intake of Junior Infant pupils for the next 4 years.

The results of this survey will inform the B.O.M. of the necessity to apply for extra accommodation for the coming years.

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 school has already begun the process of addressing the recommendations in the report as follows:

- Numeracy, Literacy and Assessment focus groups have devised a three year plan to tackle areas that need improvement as outlined in the W.S.E. report and as informed by our school evaluation. The Numeracy plan is already at an advanced stage. Teams are focussing on the revision of whole school plans including termly schemes.
- Redesigned our fortnightly plans to include more meaningful and detailed references to differentiation at an individual class level. Also have redesigned and issued guidelines on

- fortnightly planning in order to be more focussed on achieving the learning outcomes of the curriculum.
- Set up a group in order to devise a policy on staff rotation in all settings of the school.
 - Are continuing to update the school website on an on-going basis.
 - S.E.N. teachers have been deployed in a more cohesive and structured fashion to support teachers in class and to withdraw where appropriate.

The Board will also look at the area of Gaeilge and in particular to the progression of Oral Language throughout the school.

The Board will give careful consideration to the encouragement and support for the establishment of a Parents Association within the school. It will also look at the formulation of a formal policy on inclusion even though it considers that pupils from the many ethnic backgrounds within the school are well-catered for.