

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Croí Ró Naofa Junior National School,
Killinarden,
Dublin 24.

Uimhir rolla: 19652B

Date of inspection: 02 October 2014



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

1. Introduction

Croí Ró Naofa JNS is a mixed primary school, which shares a campus with its senior school in Killinarden, Dublin 24. This school, which is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, receives additional funds through its participation in DEIS Band I. The school has 297 pupils on rolls. It provides an Early Start pre-school and a unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Effective attendance strategies are in place and significant improvements have been achieved in raising the attendance levels of targeted pupils. 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 principal provides excellent leadership and is capably supported by a competent board of management.
- The deputy principal and the in-school management team coordinate and lead improvements in learning effectively.
- Overall standards of teaching and learning are very good.
- The pupils are very well behaved, motivated and courteous.
- The quality of home-school partnership is a significant strength of this inclusive and welcoming school.
- All staff members share a deep commitment to realising each child's potential and they work together in an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support.
- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs, including pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, is highly commendable overall.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- In the teaching of Mathematics, all programmes of learning should address the pupils' learning needs as a starting point, and ongoing, detailed assessment and recording of each pupil's progress in Mathematics are recommended.
- Teachers should raise levels of the pupils' engagement and active learning further, and place greater emphasis on the development of the pupils' higher-order skills.
- It is recommended that teachers align their assessment records more closely with curriculum objectives and use the outcomes to inform their planning and differentiation.

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is effective. Board members carry out all of their management duties to a high standard and the members are very visible in school life. Consideration should be given to exploring ways to communicate their work to the community.
- The principal provides excellent leadership. His visionary leadership style is informed by his commitment to high standards and to the holistic development of every child. He displays impressive management and interpersonal skills. He fosters excellent relations with parents, staff members and members of the wider community. He receives significant support from the deputy principal and the in-school management team who carry out their wide-ranging duties very effectively. They successfully coordinate and lead improvements in learning.
- The management of resources is very good. Teachers use a wide range of high-quality resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), to support and enhance the pupils' learning. The school, and its grounds and garden, are well maintained. There are stimulating displays in classrooms and on corridors. School personnel are very well managed and staff mobility is evident. All ancillary staff members, including the secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), child-care workers and caretaker, carry out their duties in an effective and supportive manner. The principal enables all staff to take an active role in school improvement through professional development, collaboration and the sharing of expertise.
- The management of relations and communications with the community is excellent. This open, welcoming, inclusive school seeks to involve parents in all aspects of school life. Very effective communication strategies are in place to inform parents about their children's education. Parents in general give very good support to the school through classroom-based learning activities, fund-raising and school events. It is now timely to explore again the setting up of a parents' association. In the Inspectorate survey conducted during the evaluation, almost all parents agreed that they are happy with the school, and that it is welcoming and well run.
- The management of pupils is a significant strength of the school. All staff are commended for the way in which they manage the pupils and foster a positive approach to discipline in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The pupils are very well behaved, mannerly and friendly.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the process of school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good. This collaborative, consultative process, led by the principal, and coordinated by post-holders, is focused on school improvement. Organisational plans are clear, relevant and informative. In general, whole-school curriculum plans have scope to provide clearer guidance to teachers on all aspects of provision and to reflect the current good practices in place.
- The school engages in effective strategic planning and school self-evaluation through its ongoing cycles of DEIS action planning. Its success to date in significantly raising standards of reading reflects the school's comprehensive engagement with evidence

gathering, data analysis, target setting, programme implementation and review. Whole-school targets, milestones and agreed methodologies are embedded across the school in literacy. The school has now begun to use this process systematically in order to raise achievement levels in Mathematics.

- Overall, the teachers' planning is of high quality. They prepare very comprehensive, objectives-based planning. Long-term plans, while detailed, should outline the assessed learning needs of pupils as their starting point, particularly in Mathematics. Appropriate monthly progress records are compiled.
- 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 and learning is very good. Teachers share their learning objectives with pupils and deliver vibrant, well-structured, well-resourced lessons. They are excellent communicators. Pupils are motivated and very attentive. They are provided with varied learning activities, with some differentiation evident. Overall, these well-delivered lessons are primarily teacher-led. Teachers should raise levels of pupil-engagement and active learning further, and place greater emphasis on the development of higher-order skills. In Early Start, there is high-quality play-based learning underway for the pre-school pupils.
- Tá cáilíocht mhaith sa Ghaeilge. Forbraítear scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí go córasach, agus is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge tríd an scoil. Baineann na hoidí úsáid éifeachtach as áiseanna agus modheolaíochtaí spreagúla chun na h-eiseamláirí teanga nua a mhúineadh. Moltar áfach, modh an aistriúcháin a sheachaint. Léiríonn cuid mhaith de na daltaí cumas maith ó thaobh labhairt na Gaeilge de, agus is féidir leo siúd ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt sa chomhrá beirte. Moltar an cleachtas seo a leathnú. Díritear aird chuí ar chothú scileanna réamh-léitheoireachta agus réamh-scribhneoireachta. Baineann na daltaí tairbhe agus taitneamh as raon breá d'fhilíochta agus d'amhrán a aithris.
- *The quality of Irish is good. The pupils' communication skills are developed incrementally, and a positive attitude to Irish is clearly evident throughout the school. The teachers make effective use of stimulating resources and methodologies to teach the new language exemplars. It is advised, however, that the use of translation be avoided. Many pupils demonstrate good ability in speaking Irish, and those pupils can both pose and answer questions while conversing in pairs. This practice should be extended. The teachers direct appropriate attention on developing pre-reading and pre-writing skills. The pupils derive enjoyment and benefit from reciting a good range of poetry and songs.*
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are very effective. Most pupils are reading at their ability level through the systematic teaching of phonics, word-identification skills, comprehension strategies and the use of graded-reading material. The teachers ensure that oral language development is central to all lessons. The pupils' writing skills are developed very well, and many pupils write with competence for a range of audiences across a selection of genres. In assessment, best practice observed included the use of tailored rubrics and writing frames which both pupils and teachers use to evaluate the pupils' writing. To develop the pupils' reading skills further, consideration

should be given to reinforcing specific reading and comprehension skills during in-class support sessions, in addition to mainstream teaching.

- In Mathematics, there is good quality teaching and learning, although there is scope to raise levels of the pupils' achievements. Good practice includes explicit teaching, varied methodologies, use of concrete materials, real-life application and some problem-solving. There is scope for much greater emphasis on ensuring that the pupils calculate for a purpose as well as more intensive, highly-participatory oral work across all strands. Programmes of learning should address the pupils' assessed learning needs as a starting point and ongoing, detailed assessment and recording of each pupil's progress will be central to raising standards incrementally. Pupils would benefit from further opportunities to engage in differentiated independent and cooperative tasks.
- The quality of Music teaching is highly commendable. There is breadth and balance across all music strands. The teachers prepare supportive musical environments and excellent resources. Pupils are exposed to music from a range of cultures and styles, and they respond in a variety of ways. Early-musical literacy is well developed and pupils experience the elements of music, for example, rhythm patterns and dynamics, through interrelated activities. The standard of song-singing is very good. The school gathers regularly in the hall to sing together in a most enjoyable and uplifting way.
- Overall, the quality of assessment is good. A range of diagnostic, screening and formative assessments is used to identify the pupils' learning needs, to track progress and to inform early-intervention. Among the good practices observed were criterion-referenced checklists, rubrics and assessment-for-learning strategies. Agreed milestones are monitored at all class levels. It is recommended that teachers align their assessment records more closely with curriculum objectives and use the outcomes to inform their planning and differentiation. The pupils' work is carefully corrected and the teachers provide positive and constructive feedback for improvement.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs is highly commendable overall. A variety of models of support and early intervention, both on an in-class and withdrawal basis, are carefully planned and delivered. Collaborative, dynamic teaching and skills-based and play-based learning are the hallmarks of the supports provided. Teachers prepare comprehensive individual and group education plans, with parents central to the process. Best practice observed in formative assessment comprises the tracking and recording of individual pupil's mastery of agreed learning objectives which are set weekly. This practice, along with the use of running records to diagnose pupils' reading difficulties, should be extended.
- Through the effective and valuable work of the personnel involved in the programmes for home-school-community liaison (HSCL) and school completion (SCP), the care team and staff, the school ensures that all pupils can fully participate in school life. A wide range of excellent additional initiatives, supports and programmes is in place. All staff members share a deep commitment to realising each child's potential and they work together in an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support. The quality of home-school partnership is excellent, and there are many opportunities given to parents to help them support their children's education, beginning, most importantly, at Early-Start provision.

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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.

We welcome this very positive report highlighting the high standards of teaching and learning, management, school self-evaluation and planning throughout the whole school including Early Start.

We appreciate that the report affirms that all staff members share a deep commitment to realising each child's potential in an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support.

We are pleased that the quality of home school partnership is acknowledged as excellent and a significant strength in our "inclusive and welcoming school", and also with the very high level of satisfaction indicated by parents in their questionnaires.

We welcome the recognition of the quality supports for pupils with special education needs, including pupils with ASD as highly commendable overall.

We appreciate that the management of pupils is seen as a significant strength and they are acknowledged as very well behaved, motivated and courteous.

The board wishes to thank the whole school community for their ongoing hard work and commitment in striving to achieve each child's full potential.

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 board and staff acknowledge the recommendations of the whole school evaluation report. The recommendations are being addressed as part of our ongoing process of continuous improvement. The recommendations are central to our self-evaluation process and school improvement plans.