

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**St. Bernadette's Junior National School  
Quarryvale, Clondalkin, D 22  
Uimhir rolla: 19743E**

**Date of inspection: 13 June 2012**



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

## 1. Introduction

St. Bernadette's JNS is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Attendance levels of the 242 pupils are good overall. The school receives additional funds from its participation in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). It attained its first Green flag in 2012. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight mainstream class settings and four 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 school's success in raising literacy levels is noteworthy and the pupils display a love of reading.
- The principal and board manage the school effectively and attend to their administrative duties very well.
- All teachers are commended for their very skilful management of pupils and their commitment to the pupils' welfare.
- This is an attractive, well-resourced and very well-maintained school, which provides a stimulating learning environment for pupils.
- Staff members successfully promote the pupils' awareness of and care for their environment and they foster positive attitudes, values and behaviours.
- The teachers are committed to and engage in continuous professional development to improve the pupils' learning outcomes.
- The management of relations and communication with the school community is very good; the school promotes an open-door policy and fosters inclusiveness.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The school should engage in a systematic school-planning and self-evaluation process involving data analysis, target setting and monitoring of the impact of programmes and strategies on pupils' learning outcomes.
- Whole-school curriculum plans need to guide all aspects of teaching and learning at each class level. Teachers' planning should address pupils' varying abilities through differentiated learning objectives and comprehensive learning programmes.
- A whole-school approach to the ongoing assessment and recording of the pupils' mastery of intended learning outcomes is recommended.
- It is advised that teachers ensure that all learning activities and tasks are closely linked to the lessons' curriculum objectives.
- In Mathematics, a whole-school approach to the teaching of problem-solving, oral mathematics and maths-in-the-environment across all strands is recommended, with a specific emphasis on targeted group teaching informed by assessment outcomes.
- It is recommended that the special education team ensure that diagnostic testing more closely informs the setting and review of specific targets and programmes of learning for

individual pupils in need of support.

### 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions effectively. It is actively engaged in policy development and school maintenance matters, and is committed to school improvement. It is advised that the board monitor the development and implementation of the school's DEIS action plan for school improvement.
- The leadership style of the principal is characterised by high expectations for pupils, effective school administration and fostering good relations with the school community. The special-duties teachers and deputy principal carry out their duties with dedication and are very supportive of the principal. They meet frequently on school matters. The next review of posts should ensure that all school management members have an enhanced role in leading and evaluating the impact of new initiatives and teaching strategies.
- The management of resources is of a high standard. The school is very well equipped with accessible, high-quality educational resources, a stimulating internal and external environment and vibrant displays. The procedures for the rotation of teachers should be documented. The ancillary staff members contribute conscientiously to the work of the school.
- The school manages its relations with the community effectively through its website, assemblies, weekly bulletins and an open-door policy. Almost all parents are happy with the school, and agree it is welcoming and well run. They are very supportive of the school and engage in many school-based activities, events and courses in tandem with staff and the home-school-community-liaison co-ordinator. While previous attempts to establish a parents' association have not yet been successful, the school should continue to encourage the formation of a representative parents' group.
- The pupils are managed very skilfully. Teachers employ consistent and affirming strategies to reward positive behaviour. Mutually-respectful relationships are nurtured between staff and pupils. A range of initiatives such as *Rainbows*, *Primary Movement* and *Incredible Years*, as well as the teaching of activities which focus on social, physical and learning skills, contribute significantly to the pupils' behaviour and welfare.

### 4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation has scope for development. Organisational planning is good. Administrative plans are clear and informative. While whole-school curriculum plans reflect the school context, there is a need to clarify intended learning outcomes for each class level in all aspects of provision. The school-planning process should incorporate a cyclical review mechanism.
- The process of school self-evaluation is at an early stage. Standardised data collation is undertaken. The challenge for the school is to analyse this and other school data in order to set attainable and measurable targets for school improvement in priority areas. These targets should be supported by detailed action plans which are closely monitored and reviewed annually. The development of a DEIS action plan for the current three-year-cycle is a priority.

- Teachers' long-term and short-term planning has scope for development. The recently-reviewed short-term planning template reflects an objectives' based approach. It should also address the pupils' varying abilities and needs through differentiated learning objectives. Long-term plans should be more comprehensive and reflect clear progression in learning between class levels.
- Overall, there is scope to develop a whole-school approach to the formative assessment of pupils which informs the teachers' short-term planning. Some excellent approaches to assessment and the recording of assessment outcomes were observed in a small number of classes. The pupils' written work is consistently corrected and, in some instances, feedback for improvement is provided.
- 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

- In general, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in the lessons observed is competent, with scope for development in some aspects of provision. Teachers prepare attractive environments and use an appropriate range of resources. Levels of pupil application are very well developed. Whole-class teaching is the main methodology. Best practice observed reflected focused teaching of new content, lively pace and thorough revision. Lesson structure should incorporate the sharing of objectives and consolidation of pupils' learning, with extended provision for purposeful pair work. Teachers should ensure that the learning activities and tasks are more closely linked to the lessons' stated curriculum objectives. The pre-school pupils in the *Early Start* setting carry out their stimulating learning activities with confidence and independence.
- Ar an iomlán, sroichtear caighdeán cuí sa Ghaeilge. Baineann na h-oidí dea-úsáid as áiseanna, puipéid, postaeir, cluichí spreagúla agus luascháirtaí chun an foclóir nua a mhúineadh. Chonacthas sár chleachtas i mhúineadh na Mata trí mheán na Gaeilge, agus na daltaí ag déanamh cumarsáide lena chéile chun fadhbanna a réiteach. Moltar béim níos mó a leagan ar an tréimhse cumarsáide sna ceachtanna chun na frásaí nua a threisú. Moltar freisin cnuasach de rainn agus d'amhráin, bunaithe ar na téamaí, a mhúineadh do gach rang. Ar an iomlán, déantar obair mhaith i gcothú scileanna réamh-léitheoireachta na ndaltaí.
- *Overall there are satisfactory standards in Irish. Teachers make good use of resources, puppets, posters, stimulating games and flashcards to teach new vocabulary. Excellent practice was observed in the teaching of Mathematics through Irish where pupils communicated together to solve problems. It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the lessons' communicative phase to reinforce new phrases. In addition, a core set of theme-based poems and songs should be taught to each class. In general, there is good work undertaken in the promotion of pupils' early-reading skills.*
- Standards in English are generally competent. The school's success in raising literacy levels is noteworthy and the pupils display a love of reading. Current reading-promotion strategies include good phonics' instruction, class booklets, levelled-reading material and Buddy reading. To build on this, it is recommended that an agreed range of word-attack and comprehension skills be taught consistently to enable the pupils to read with fluency, expression and understanding. Teachers should ensure that all pupils are reading at an

appropriate level of challenge. The pupils' listening skills are very well developed; there is scope to enhance their expressive skills. In many classes pupils are enabled to write for a variety of purposes and audiences, and the process of drafting and editing was observed. This good work should be extended. Standards of pupils' writing and presentation vary, with some very good examples observed.

- The standard of teaching and learning in Mathematics has scope for development. The school is currently prioritising *number*, use of resources and in-class support. Where practice was effective there was comprehensive oral work, teaching of problem-solving strategies, real-life application and ongoing revision. Most pupils observed demonstrated appropriate understanding of *number*. The challenge for the school is to raise learning standards, particularly for low-achieving pupils, across all strands. A whole-school approach to problem-solving, oral mathematics and maths-in-the-environment is recommended with a specific emphasis on targeted group teaching. Pupils' learning tasks should be very closely linked to the lessons' curriculum objectives. Teachers should engage in the ongoing assessment and recording of the pupils' mastery of relevant objectives to determine the effectiveness of teaching.
- The quality of Geography is competent. The school successfully promotes the pupils' awareness of and care for their environment through its broad programme, its Green School's actions, the school garden and through the fostering of positive attitudes, values and behaviours. Good work is achieved in developing the pupils' sense of space and place, and appropriate use is made of the local environment. The pupils engage in suitable field work, local trips, mapping activities and the use of story to develop their skills as geographers. The documenting of this good work in the school plan is advised.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- Pupils with special educational needs are welcomed into an inclusive school environment which provides well for their social and physical needs. The staged approach is in place. Support, both withdrawal and in-class, is provided in a positive, caring way. There is, however, scope to develop the manner in which support is provided. Where effective practice was noted, there were clear learning targets and implementation strategies outlined in individual education plans, and detailed planning, structured lessons and frequent reinforcement were observed. This practice should be shared and implemented by all teachers in support roles. It is recommended that the specific learning needs of individual pupils be identified and met through diagnostic assessment and ongoing planning which involves the setting and regular review of attainable targets in all special educational settings.
- The school implements a very good range of strategies to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds which include school lunches, after-school activities, speech and language therapy, the homework club and Early Start.

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