

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT
Sacred Heart National School
Sruleen, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla: 19799I

Date of inspection: 02 May 2014



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

1. Introduction

Sacred Heart NS is a vertical, co-educational primary school situated in Sruleen, Clondalkin. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school serves a diverse population including many pupils whose first language is not English. Attendance levels for the majority of the 436 pupils enrolled are very good. The school successfully implements a wide range of strategies to promote attendance. The school has achieved three Green Flags. 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 ten mainstream class settings and four 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 quality of school management and leadership, as exemplified by the principal, the in-school management team and the board of management, is excellent.
- The teachers are competent and reflective practitioners who are dedicated to school improvement.
- The quality of special educational needs support is highly commendable.
- Effective early-intervention programmes are provided through highly-collaborative models of team teaching.
- The process of both school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) is highly commendable.
- This very inclusive, welcoming school fosters excellent relations with parents and provides praiseworthy pastoral care to all pupils.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The teachers are advised to use a wider range of methodologies in order to raise the levels of pupils' participation during their learning activities.
- In English, there is scope to develop the pupils' communication skills and their engagement with poetry in a more systematic and progressive manner.
- I múineadh na Gaeilge, ba chóir tuilleadh deiseanna a sholáthar do na daltaí an teanga nuafhoghlamtha a úsáid i bpéirí agus i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla chun máistreacht a fháil air.

- *In the teaching of Irish, the pupils should be provided with extended opportunities to use the newly-learned language in pairs and in different contexts in order to gain mastery of it.*

3. Quality of School Management

- The work of the board of management is very effective. Board members carry out all aspects of their management duties to a high standard and in a spirit of collaboration and dedication. They engage in policy formation and strategic planning, attend to school maintenance issues and are very supportive of the staff. They are also very well informed regarding curriculum issues and educational standards in the school.
- Excellent leadership is provided by the principal who is a highly visible presence in the school. His work is characterised by his effective management and administration skills, his fostering of very strong relations with staff and parents, and his commitment to the success of each child within the school. His vision is shared by the deputy principal and the in-school management team who carry out their duties very competently. The principal empowers all staff to take an active role in the process of school improvement through his distributive leadership style.
- The management of resources is very good. This is evident in the accessibility and use by teachers of a wide range of resources, including ICT, to support and enhance the pupils' learning. The school, its grounds and internal garden, are attractive and very well maintained. There are good quality displays in classrooms and school corridors. Personnel are very well managed and all ancillary staff members, including the secretary, special needs assistants and caretaker, carry out their duties in a supportive, friendly manner.
- The management of relations and communications with the community is highly commendable. Very effective communication strategies are in place. Parents are enabled to participate in school life. The parents' association and parents in general give very good support to the school, In the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents agree they are happy with the school and that it is welcoming and well run.
- The pupils are managed in a very supportive and affirmative way. They are friendly and very well behaved. A positive approach to discipline is embedded in the school. In the Inspectorate survey, almost all pupils agree they feel safe in class and know they can get help from a teacher if bullied. Most agree it is a good school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very high. This collaborative, consultative process, led by the principal, and coordinated by committee leaders, is focused on school improvement. Organisational plans are clear and informative. In general, curriculum plans give appropriate guidance on many aspects of provision.
- The school engages in effective strategic planning. The current SSE action plan for literacy reflects the school's comprehensive engagement with evidence gathering, data analysis, target setting, programme implementation and review.
- Overall, the teachers prepare competent, objectives-based planning. Long-term plans have scope to reflect more fully the context and needs of each specific class. Mainstream

teachers should record the additional support they provide for individual pupils identified at stage one of the continuum of support, using the School Support Plan template.

- It is recommended that the school review the extent to which the agreed format and current use of its monthly progress reports (*cuntais mhíosúla*) inform overall progress in 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

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers share their learning objectives with pupils and deliver well-structured, well-resourced lessons. In infants there is high-quality play-based learning. Effective, differentiated, early-intervention programmes (Power Hour and *Aistear*) are delivered in collaborative models of team teaching. There is scope for differentiation to be a stronger feature in the mainstream teachers' practice overall.
- In general, teacher-led, whole-class teaching is the preferred methodology. There is scope to enhance the pupils' participation levels through the use by teachers of a wider range of methodologies which promote greater cooperation and self-directed learning among pupils. The pupils display good recall and understanding of prior learning. They present their work very well and their efforts and achievements are affirmed and celebrated. In the survey, nearly all pupils agree that teachers explain things clearly and that they enjoy their lessons and learning.
- Overall, assessment is good. It is praiseworthy that the school is conducting a review of current practice in order to identify and share best practice. A comprehensive range of diagnostic, screening and formative assessments is used to identify the pupils' learning needs and to inform early-intervention in literacy and numeracy. Varied strategies including checklists, rubrics, portfolios and assessment-for-learning are in use in classrooms. It is advised 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 regularly corrected though there is scope for greater consistency regarding the teachers' constructive feedback for improvement.
- Tá cáilíocht chuí sa Ghaeilge cé go bhfuil gnéithe le feabhsú. Úllmhaíonn na hoidí timpeallacht saibhir i bprionta agus cothaíonn siad dearcadh dearfach i leith an teanga. Sna ceachtanna, ba chóir achar níos faide a chaitheamh ar mhúineadh na n-eiseamláirí nua bunaithe ar na téamaí, mar atá leagtha amach sa phlean scoile. Ba chóir freisin, tuilleadh deiseanna a sholáthar do na daltaí na h-eiseamláirí a úsáid i bpéirí agus i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla chun máistreacht a fháil orthu. Tá caighdeán cuí léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoirachta sroichte ag tromlach na ndaltaí. Moltar fíor-leabhair agus úrscéalta a úsáid níos leithne.
- *The standard of Irish is satisfactory, though there are aspects for improvement. The teachers prepare a rich language environment and foster positive attitudes towards the language. During lessons, teachers should spend more time on teaching the new language exemplars based on the themes, as laid out in the school plan. In addition, the pupils should be given more opportunities to use these exemplars in pairs and in different contexts in*

order to gain mastery of them. Satisfactory standards in reading and writing are attained by pupils. Greater use of real books and novels is advised.

- The quality of teaching and learning in English is good. All aspects of reading are well taught, with good emphasis on fluency, comprehension skills, matching reading material to pupils' abilities and early-intervention. The pupils write well in a range of genres and gain appropriate experience in the writing process. Talk and discussion, and language development are features of all lessons. There is scope to develop the pupils' communication skills and their engagement with poetry in a more systematic and progressive manner. Teachers should place greater emphasis on the teaching of specific oral language skills and theme-based language.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. There is explicit teaching of concepts, appropriate teacher-modelling and use of very good resources. Overall, the teachers prepare stimulating mathematics displays. They place good emphasis on developing the pupils' problem-solving skills using agreed approaches. The pupils display competence in their knowledge of number facts and in carrying out everyday operations. Extended opportunities should be given to the pupils to develop their reasoning and communication skills in Mathematics using appropriate mathematical language.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Physical Education are competent. The teachers provide balanced programmes across all strands of the curriculum. They deliver lessons that are well structured with appropriate emphasis on skill development. There is good teacher demonstration, instruction and monitoring. Teachers ensure that the pupils are appropriately warmed up and engaged at all times. To extend this good provision, more emphasis should be placed on enabling the pupils to experiment and communicate more frequently during lessons and to reinforce their skills and agility in a cooperative, non-competitive setting.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of supports for pupils with special educational needs, including language needs, is excellent. This highly-skilled, dedicated team ensures that the varied models and interventions provided are carefully planned and very well coordinated. Support is primarily literacy focused. Extended support for Mathematics should now be considered. The team uses assessment data effectively to plan their supports and to track the pupils' progress. Detailed individual and group education plans are compiled. These comprise focused, time-bound learning targets and appropriate methodologies. Dynamic teaching and high expectations are the hallmarks of all supports which are provided on a withdrawal and in-class basis.
- A significant strength of the school is the quality of the pastoral care it provides to pupils. This inclusive school ensures that all pupils can fully participate in school life. A wide range of additional supports, sports and activities are provided including a book-rental scheme, computer programming, Green-School actions, play therapy and access to School-Completion programmes. There is excellent provision to promote and celebrate interculturalism; this good practice should be set out in the school plan.

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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 of Sacred Heart School would like to acknowledge the affirmation received in this Whole School Evaluation report.

The Board is encouraged by and agrees with the identified strengths and good practices as outlined in the report.

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 of Management also acknowledges and fully accepts the recommendations for further development as laid out in the report and has commenced actions and procedures to ensure those recommendations are carried out as soon as possible.