

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
REPORT**

**Archbishop Ryan Junior National School  
Balgaddy, Lucan, Co. Dublin  
Uimhir rolla: 19865S**

**Date of inspection: 24 May 2012**



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

## 1. Introduction

Archbishop Ryan Junior National School is a forty two teacher co-educational school for pupils from junior infants to second class. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The current enrolment of 566 pupils includes children from many international backgrounds for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Additional resources have been provided to the school through its involvement in the *School Completion Programme* and the Department's *Giving Children an Even Break* scheme. Overall attendance levels are very good for most pupils and the school has succeeded in improving attendance patterns for some poor attendees. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in fourteen mainstream class settings and eight 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 discharges its legislative and policy development responsibilities very effectively.
- The principal and in-school management team provide very strong and collaborative leadership for the school community.
- School self-evaluation is well established in the school with assessment data being analysed thoroughly to establish improvement targets and to guide implementation strategies.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good and significant improvements have been made in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers communicate high expectations for their pupils and they employ consistent, positive and affirming strategies to reward positive behaviour.
- Support teaching is of a very high quality with structured lessons, appropriate methodologies and resources, caring relationships and frequent reinforcement of learning.

The following **main recommendation** is made:

- Moltar béim sa bhreis a chur ar chothú scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge.
- *Greater emphasis should be placed on the development of the pupils' communication skills in Irish.*

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management discharges its legislative and policy development responsibilities very effectively. Its members are well informed and highly committed to

the school. The board's priorities emphasise high expectations for educational outcomes, enhancement of the school building and interest in the safety and welfare of pupils.

- The work of the in-school management team is of a very high quality. The principal articulates a clear vision and she provides very strong leadership for the school community. She is very skilfully assisted in her role by the administrative deputy principal. Important curriculum, administrative and pastoral care leadership roles are shared among the in-school management team. Leadership in the school is highly organised, collaborative and effectively delegated. It is praiseworthy that formal leadership roles are enhanced by the voluntary involvement of other teachers in interest groups to lead, pilot and evaluate new modes of educational provision.
- Resources are managed very successfully. The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard and each classroom is equipped with a wide range of suitable books and educational resources. It is commendable that shared resources are maintained and catalogued in a central location for ease of access. The caretaker, secretary, cleaners and special needs assistants contribute conscientiously to the work of the school.
- The school manages its relations with the community very competently. Effective communication with parents is promoted through use of the school website, text messages and newsletters. Commendable efforts are made to communicate with parents for whom English is an additional language. While previous attempts to establish a parents' association have not yet been successful, it is recommended that the board continue to encourage its establishment.
- Pupil management is very effective. Teachers communicate high expectations for their pupils and they employ consistent, positive and affirming strategies to reward positive behaviour. Mutually respectful relationships are evident between staff and pupils. Care initiatives such as *Rainbows*, *the Homework Club*, *the Get Ahead Club* and *Primary Movement* contribute significantly to pupils' welfare.

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

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is commendable. There is evidence of collaboration between teachers and board members in the planning process. The establishment of a parents' association could enhance consultation with parents during policy development.
- Very high quality plans have been developed incrementally to guide and co-ordinate teaching and learning for each curriculum area and for pupils with special educational needs. These plans have been devised to meet the specific needs of the school. They are communicated to staff and are reflected in classroom practice.
- All required administrative policies have been ratified and provide clarity in regard to many school activities. In future reviews of administrative planning, it is advised that the school record and ratify many of the commendable school procedures evident during the evaluation.
- School self-evaluation is well established in the school. Standardised and observational assessment data are analysed thoroughly to establish improvement targets and to guide implementation strategies. It is evident that school targets are influential in guiding classroom planning, teaching methodologies and approaches to differentiation.

- Overall the quality of classroom planning is good, with some very good planning observed. Long-term planning was most effective where teachers consolidated and integrated the strategies and programmes for each subject area. Features of best short-term planning included specific references to differentiation and to the reinforcement of topics previously taught. Monthly reports provide good evidence of continuity and progression 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 overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers display proficient teaching skills and classroom management is conducive to learning. Lessons are structured logically to introduce, develop and reinforce specific learning outcomes. Very effective examples of collaborative learning methodologies and well co-ordinated in-class support teaching were observed. Structured play is facilitated very effectively in infant classes and some teachers are implementing the *Aistear* programme.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí go maith sa Ghaeilge. Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar theanga teagaisc agus cuirtear deiseanna éisteachta inmholta ar fáil do na daltaí. Baintear tairbhe as gníomhaíochtaí oiriúnacha agus áiseanna iontacha chun suim agus rannpháirtíocht na ndaltaí a chothú. Cé go léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint mhaith ar theanga nua, moltar béim sa bhreis a chur ar chothú scileanna cúmarsáide na ndaltaí. Forbraítear scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí go cuí. Aithrisíonn na daltaí stór breá rann agus amhrán i ngach rang.
- *The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. Irish is used as the instructional language and praiseworthy listening opportunities are provided for pupils. Suitable activities and wonderful resources are utilised to cultivate pupils' interest and participation. While pupils display good understanding of new vocabulary, it is recommended that extra emphasis be placed on developing their communication skills. Reading and writing skills are developed appropriately. Pupils in each class recite a fine range of poems and songs.*
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are of a very high quality and teachers successfully integrate the oral, reading and writing strands of the curriculum. Oral language is developed purposefully to nurture pupils' confidence and competence. All pupils can recite a wide range of rhymes and poetry with expression.
- The systematic and effective use of a synthetic phonics programme has successfully equipped pupils with word-attack skills. All teachers provide stimulating print-rich environments and pupils' reading material is carefully chosen from a wide range of age-appropriate books and class novels. Initiatives such as *paired reading* and the *bedtime reading club* foster pupils' love of books and overall reading standards are very good.
- Writing skills are developed conscientiously from the pre-writing stage to independent writing in a wide variety of genres. In some classrooms there is scope to personalise and link writing tasks more closely with pupils' life experiences. Most pupils present their handwriting very neatly.

- Effective practice was observed in teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics. Commendable efforts have been made to create a mathematics-rich environment in the school through the class displays and the mathematics trails. Intensive in-class support strategies are implemented very successfully to promote differentiated learning, discussion of mathematical language and problem-solving strategies.
- All teachers incorporate oral mathematical activities across the curriculum strands to promote speed and accuracy in pupils' work. Lessons are presented effectively through the use of collaborative methodologies and suitable concrete resources. While most lessons are structured to consolidate learning, it is recommended that regular topical assessment is undertaken to aid early identification and revision of difficult objectives.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science are of a very high quality. The school grounds have been adapted to facilitate environmental exploration. Teachers structure their lessons to develop pupils' scientific skills and discovery learning in all strands of the curriculum. In their oral responses and written work, most pupils can recall and explain topics using appropriate scientific language. Very good investigative work, and designing and making activities were observed.
- Very successful assessment practices were evident in mainstream and support classes. Results of standardised, screening and diagnostic tests are analysed thoroughly to determine pupils' learning needs. Some teachers demonstrated good use of assessment for learning techniques. All teachers monitor their pupils' work consistently and they maintain a range of observational and performance data on each pupil.

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

- The school welcomes and includes pupils from a wide variety of nationalities. Supports for pupils with additional learning or language needs are provided through a combination of in-class and withdrawal interventions. The co-ordination of support teaching is very successful in optimising instructional time.
- The quality of outcomes is very good for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional Language (EAL). Very effective learning targets and focussed implementation strategies are identified in the individual educational plans (IEPs) for all pupils receiving support. Support teaching is of a very high quality with structured lessons, appropriate methodologies and resources, caring relationships and frequent reinforcement.
- Several strategies are implemented very successfully to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. These include the provision of school lunches, the book rental scheme, the homework club, participation in the *School Completion Programme* and support from the care team.
- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Parental involvement in the school is promoted through programmes such as Maths for Fun and reading initiatives. In response to the Inspectorate survey, almost all parents expressed satisfaction with the school and with how the school welcomes parents.

# 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 wishes to thank the reporting inspector and his colleagues for the courteous and professional manner in which the Whole School Evaluation was conducted. It has been a very positive and affirming experience for the school community. The Board is pleased that the report acknowledges the continuous commitment and dedication of the staff in providing a positive learning experience for all pupils.

#### **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 is committed to supporting the establishment of a Parents Association for the school.