

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Colm
Crumlin, Dublin 12
Uimhir rolla: 19889J

Date of inspection: 15 April 2013



1. Introduction

Scoil Colm operates under the Patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school caters for 123 boys from second to sixth class. It receives funding under DEIS band 1, has one Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) teacher and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). Overall attendance levels are generally good but a small number of pupils are absent for more than 20 days. The school has analysed its attendance data in detail. Effective attendance strategies are in place and the overall trend is improving. 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:

- Scoil Colm is an inclusive school that welcomes all pupils. Staff display high levels of caring and respect for pupils.
- The school has an experienced and effective board of management.
- The ongoing development of the school is supported by a highly committed and capable principal and staff who work in a focussed manner in addressing the care and learning needs of the pupils.
- Teachers effectively use a wide range of teaching approaches and successfully deliver carefully-planned, well-structured lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate very good levels of engagement and participation in lessons.
- Creditable progress is being made in the use of school self-evaluation.
- Parents give very good support to the school.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A school policy covering all areas of special education should be developed. The effective dissemination and implementation of this policy will facilitate a cohesive approach and provide clarity on the specific roles of all staff in meeting the special education needs of pupils.
- To secure ongoing improvement in the pupils' learning outcomes and achievement, the implementation of a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment of and for learning is recommended.
- It is recommended that sustained attention be given to the teaching of discrete listening and speaking skills on a whole-school basis.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very supportive of the school. It is properly constituted and holds regular, well-structured meetings. Minutes are recorded and school accounts are audited. Duties are carried out efficiently and competently and board members demonstrate good awareness of the achievement levels at the school.
- The school is led by a dedicated and diligent principal. Her priorities include the improvement of literacy and numeracy standards and the promotion of a culture of professional dialogue, collaboration and reflection in the school. She demonstrates a keen awareness of the individual talents and skills of her teachers and her interactions with members of the school community are respectful. Almost all parents said the school was well run. The work of in-school management (ISM) contributes substantially to the effective running of the school and to aspects of teaching, learning and pupil achievement. Nonetheless, a reconfiguration of duties is recommended to utilise fully the potential of the ISM team and to reflect the curriculum leadership requirements of the school. The willingness of staff to take on a wide range of school development tasks is praised.
- Classroom environments are pleasant and stimulating. Available resources are well-managed and used purposefully by teachers. As financial resources permit, it would be beneficial to increase the range of mathematics and literacy resources available. The large, old school building is well-maintained. The expense of running and maintaining the school building is a serious concern for the board. The support provided by all the ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the life of the school.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very good. In the parent questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of parents said the school is welcoming of them. Formal parent/teacher meetings are held once a year, reports are sent home to parents biannually and parents are welcome to meet with teachers if they have a concern. The work of the HSCL co-ordinator in promoting positive relationships with the school community is praised. A wide range of initiatives is implemented including home visitation, opportunities for parents to participate in relevant courses and school activities and support for pupils' transition to second level. A parents' association has recently been established and is actively involved in supporting the work of the school. Consideration should be given to encouraging the Parents' Association to affiliate to the National Parents' Council.
- Overall the management of the pupils by teachers is very good. Rules, routines and expectations are explained clearly and understood by all and the teachers' interactions with pupils are respectful and positive. In the pupil questionnaires, most pupils stated that the teachers treat everyone fairly.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Praiseworthy progress has been made in the development of a wide range of policies across organisational, curricular and pastoral areas. A detailed DEIS plan has been devised and is positively influencing the school's provision for literacy and numeracy in particular. Creditable progress is being made in the use of school self-evaluation and this work is linked successfully to the DEIS plan. To optimise the impact of whole-school initiatives on pupils' learning, it is recommended that structures be put in place to ensure the incremental implementation and systematic monitoring of agreed approaches.

- The overall quality of teachers' classroom planning is high. All teachers complete an agreed template. Features of effective practice include the identification of specific learning objectives, a focus on skills development and provision for differentiated learning activities.
- 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

- Overall there is high quality teaching in the school. Lessons are well structured and teachers use a wide range of teaching approaches. Clear explanations of new content are given and teachers' questioning is skilful. In the parent questionnaires, most parents agreed that teaching is good in the school. Pupils demonstrate very good levels of engagement and interest in lessons and are afforded ample opportunities to work collaboratively. Some fine examples of the assessment of pupil progress are in evidence. To secure sustained improvement in the pupils' learning outcomes and achievement, the implementation of a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment of and for learning is recommended. This should include comprehensive analysis of assessment information, more explicit tracking of progress made in relation to DEIS targets at individual and class levels and formative feedback to pupils. Less than half of pupils surveyed reported that they amend their work after teachers correct it.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht na múinteoireachta go maith. Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach ann i leith na Gaeilge agus tá fonn ar na hoidí í a fheabhsú. Baintear úsáid chruthaitheach as raon straitéisí oiriúnacha chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Cé go bhfuil foclóir oiriúnach ar eolas ag na daltaí agus tá an chuid is mó díobh ábalta ceisteanna a fhreagairt bunaithe ar théamaí éagsúla, b'fhiú béim níos láidre a leagadh ar fhorbairt scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí agus deiseanna níos mó a thabhairt dóibh an teanga a úsáid agus a chleachtadh go cumarsáideach. Cleachtar an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil go rialta.
- *The quality of teaching in Irish is good. There is a positive outlook towards the teaching of Irish and an interest in improving standards. The teachers creatively use a range of suitable strategies to generate pupil interest. Even though pupils demonstrate appropriate vocabulary development and most of them can answer questions based on various themes, it is advised that a greater emphasis be placed on developing communicative skills with pupils being provided with additional opportunities to communicate in Irish. Reading and functional writing are practised regularly.*
- The overall quality of teaching in English is very good. The school is praised for its introduction of a wide variety of interventions to cultivate a love of reading and to improve reading abilities. Analysis of standardised tests results indicate that improvements in reading standards have been achieved. Careful efforts are made by teachers to ensure that pupils read at instructional level and almost all parents responded that the school is helping their child with reading. Substantial progress has been made in improving the pupils' capacity to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. While most pupils demonstrate suitable competence and confidence in language, for a number of pupils a range of language needs is in evidence. The recent introduction of *First Steps Listening and Speaking* is acknowledged. Sustained attention on a whole-school basis to the teaching of discrete listening and speaking skills on a whole-school basis is recommended.

- There is high quality teaching in Mathematics and improvements in pupil achievement over the last three years are in evidence. Praiseworthy features of current practice include the emphasis on mental Mathematics, language of Mathematics, real-life Mathematics and an agreed approach to the teaching of problem-solving. New concepts are introduced skilfully through well-designed talk and discussion and ample opportunities for collaborative working are afforded to pupils. In the main, the pupils display competent understanding of concepts previously addressed. In order to build on their mathematical confidence further and ensure ongoing improvements in achievement, pupils would benefit from increased opportunities to explore concepts through the use of manipulatives and the environment.
- Highly-skilled practice is evident in the teaching of Music. Pupils experience the full breadth of the Music curriculum. Lessons comprise enthusiastic song-singing, in unison and two-part harmonies, listening and responding, composition and the development of music literacy skills. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of musical concepts, literacy and listening and responding to Music. Through the school's involvement in the St. Agnes and Scoil Colm Primary School Orchestra all pupils learn to play at least one musical instrument. In reviewing provision for Music, clarity regarding the spiral development of literacy skills is advised.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Staff at the school are very committed to meeting the care and learning needs of pupils and the school has a range of structures in place to meet those needs. Pupils are supported through placement in the special class for mild general learning difficulties, withdrawn individually or in groups, and through in-class support for literacy and numeracy. While the school has developed a special educational needs policy which incorporates the staged approach, there is need for the school to develop one overall policy to cover all areas of special education. The effective dissemination and implementation of this policy will facilitate a cohesive approach and provide clarity on the specific roles of all staff in meeting the special education needs of pupils.

Lessons in support settings are carefully structured and effective teaching strategies are used. Teachers prepare detailed individual education plans (IEPs) and use these to directly inform their programmes of learning. It is important to ensure that in all instances the targets contained in the individual plans are directly related to the learning needs of the pupils and are reviewed regularly. Further use of diagnostic testing and the information contained in professional reports will assist this process. Pupils participate well in sessions and are achieving positive learning outcomes.

- Other supports for pupils include activities funded by SCP such as a breakfast and a homework club. Through its successful links with outside agencies speech therapy and counselling services are provided for identified pupils.

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 would like to thank the inspectorate for their positive report on Scoil Colm. The inspectors made this difficult task easier for the school by their approach. The Board was delighted that the hard work of the staff was recognised, in particular the high quality teaching. The Board was also pleased that the role of parents in the school community was recognised and the overwhelming majority of parents feel very welcome in the school. As the care of our pupils is a priority, the recognition of this in the report is also welcome.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Following the issuing of the report, support was requested from the SESS to assist us in examining our existing plans in the area of Special Education and Learning Support with a view to creating one overall policy to cover all areas of special education as recommended. This policy has been scheduled for completion during the 2013/14 school year.

Similar support has also been requested from PDST with a view to implementing a consistent, whole school approach to assessment of and assessment for learning. This policy has been scheduled for completion during the 2013/14 school year.

Implementation of the First Steps Speaking and Listening Programme is scheduled for September 2013. Each oral language convention, which includes discrete listening and speaking skills, will be included in the yearly plan for English (and integrated with the First Steps plan for Writing and Reading).