

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Scoil Treasa Naofa
Donore Ave, Dublin 8
Uimhir rolla: 19933J

Date of inspection: 18 February 2013



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

1. Introduction

Scoil Treasa Naofa is a Catholic school under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust and the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It is situated in the heart of Dublin city and caters for boys and girls from junior infants to sixth class. While the attendance of the majority of the 128 pupils on roll is generally good, the attendance of a significant number of pupils is an ongoing concern. The school participates in the Department's DEIS programme. 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 developments in the school in recent years reflect the commitment, willingness and capacity among staff members and the board to bring about improvement.
- A safe learning environment is provided where everyone is cared for, valued and respected.
- An open-door policy is in place and parents feel welcome in the school.
- The board of management carries out its duties effectively and is very conscious and aware of the care and learning needs of the pupils.
- Pupil behaviour is excellent. The principal and teachers have consistently high expectations of behaviour for all pupils and mutual respect is the hallmark of all relationships.
- A range of very good teaching and classroom management skills is employed across the school and there is a commitment among staff members to continuous professional development.
- The team spirit among the staff and the collaborative practices in place are an excellent foundation for maximising whole-school approaches to improvement.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that all targets in the DEIS plan are focused on the pupils' learning needs and clearly inform both the teaching in the classrooms and how monitoring of learning will take place.
- The management of the school, and in particular the principal, should further develop curriculum leadership among the staff to support the coherent and consistent implementation and monitoring of programmes of learning.
- A wider range of assessment information should be used to inform objectives for learning, approaches to differentiation and the use of support materials in the teaching.
- Further teaching strategies should be introduced to provide pupils with opportunities to engage in more enquiry-based learning and to apply what they have learned in different contexts.

- It is recommended that the school continue to explore creative ways of engaging parents in their children's education.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management meets regularly and carries out its duties effectively. The board has a clear sense of purpose which is reflected in the school's strategic statement. The board has identified priorities that are both meaningful and appropriate such as attending to the care needs of the pupils and the raising of standards of literacy and numeracy.
- The recently appointed principal has cultivated a strong team spirit among the staff. Relationships in the school are positive and working collaboratively is the norm. She has established a range of clear school procedures, policies and practices, has supported and encouraged continuous professional development (CPD) among the staff and undertaken a whole-school review process where strengths and areas for development were identified. In this context, the principal has placed a specific focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. These developments, linked with the commitment and skills among the in-school management team and staff indicate the capacity that exists within the school to bring about improvement.
- The key challenge for the principal is to further develop curriculum leadership among the staff. This will help to support the coherent and consistent implementation and monitoring of programmes of learning. Together with her management colleagues, she should endeavour to ensure that what ever is planned and agreed is implemented and assessed and that the expectations for standards set remain high.
- The school building and physical environment are very attractive, are excellently maintained and provide a positive and supportive learning environment for the pupils. A wider range of resources has been acquired for the classrooms in recent years. While some use of ICT was evident during the evaluation, it is recommended that that the development of specific ICT skills be embedded in teaching and learning in the classrooms.
- An open-door policy operates in the school and parents are made welcome. According to the findings from the parent questionnaires, parents are happy with the school. Parents also feel that the atmosphere is good and that they know who to talk to if there is a problem. Efforts are currently underway to re-establish a Parents' Association. Through the current literacy initiative a number of parents have become involved in supporting their own child's reading. It is recommended that the school continue to explore creative ways of engaging parents in their children's education.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupil behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. Clear standards have been established and mutually respectful whole-school approaches to managing behaviour are in place and are practiced consistently. Pupil behaviour is excellent and all encounters with pupils during the evaluation were respectful and courteous. Teachers display a caring and open attitude to the pupils and a warm, secure and supportive atmosphere has been created. According to the pupil questionnaire, pupils know the school rules, feel safe in the class and know who to talk to if there is a problem. To further develop the pupil's voice and sense of self-efficacy, consideration should be given to developing a student council.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A three-year DEIS action plan has been drafted by the principal in collaboration with staff members. However, the yearly targets and actions, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy are too general and do not adequately reflect the findings in the school reviews. Action plans should provide sufficient guidance for classroom implementation and monitoring of progress. Building on the school review process and on the very good collaborative planning practices in place, it is recommended that all targets are specific, measurable and relevant. Targets should clearly inform teaching in the classrooms and provide guidance as to how progress will be determined.
- To support the schools' current focus on literacy and numeracy, it is recommended that opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills across curricular areas are maximised.
- 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

- A range of very good teaching skills is employed across the school. These include the ability to structure lessons, to use appropriate resources effectively, to manage whole-class and group activities, to explain concepts clearly, to engage and motivate pupils and to use a variety of teaching strategies. Good efforts are made in some classes to differentiate learning for the pupils. Effective differentiation strategies should be shared among teachers and extended to all classes. Co-teaching and collaborative dialogue are also very good features of teaching in the school. Most teachers have engaged in relevant CPD.
- Almost all parents think that teaching is good in the school and that the work their child is asked to do is matched to his/her ability. Similarly, almost all pupils agree that teachers explain things clearly and most pupils enjoy their lessons and learning. It was also evident during the evaluation that pupils need to be given further opportunities to engage in more enquiry-based learning and to learn to apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. In this way pupils can develop higher-order thinking skills and make connections to what they already know. Such opportunities should be incorporated regularly into lessons.
- Teachers are aware of the need for continuous assessment to inform teaching and learning and use a variety of assessment approaches, including standardised tests through the school. Good beginnings have been made in collating, reviewing and analysing some of this assessment information. To improve learning outcomes, a wider range of assessment information should be used consistently to inform objectives for learning and approaches to differentiation. Further use of support materials and the regular use of revision and consolidation are also factors that will help in this regard.
- Cruthaíonn na hoidí dearcadh dearfach i leith na Gaeilge agus baineann na daltaí sult as na gceachtanna. Cuirtear béim chuí ar an bhfoclóir agus tá stórfhocal maith ag na daltaí. I bhformhór na ranganna tugtar deiseanna dóibh cleachtadh a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge. Baintear úsáid mhaith as cluichí, rannta agus amhráin agus tá raon maith d'áiseanna á

úsáid le linn an teagaisc. Moltar clár cuimsitheach, leanúnach a leagan amach agus a chur i bhfeidhm, bunaithe ar chuspóirí sa Ghaeilge labhartha agus éisteachta.

- *The teachers have cultivated a very positive attitude towards Irish and pupils enjoy the lessons in Irish. Appropriate emphasis is placed on learning vocabulary and the pupils have a good range of words in Irish. In most classes pupils are given the opportunity to practice using the language. Games, songs and rhymes and a good range of resources are used competently in the teaching. It is recommended that a comprehensive and incremental programme based on clear listening and speaking objectives should be drawn up.*
- Management and staff are aware of, and are concerned that, learning outcomes in literacy need significant improvement. A structured reading and writing initiative is currently implemented in a consistent manner through the school. Substantial time in the daily timetable has been allocated to this programme in each class and all teachers engage in regular professional development to support the teaching and learning in the programme. Some very good teaching practices are now in place. These include: good teacher modelling of reading and writing, the use of class novels from third class, the teaching of a structured phonics programme from junior infants, teaching reading in small groups, the use of in-class support and an emphasis on differentiated expectations. All classrooms are print-rich and have dedicated reading corners. The majority of pupils and parents indicated, through the questionnaires, that they are happy with pupils' progress in reading and with the teaching of reading. Pupils display a high level of interest in reading and writing. The recent involvement of parents in supporting their child's reading is another positive development that has taken place.
- A range of writing genres is also being promoted and pupils demonstrate an interest in writing and expressing their ideas. The teachers indicated that they have seen considerable improvements in the pupils' writing skills in the last two years.
- While it will take some time to determine the effectiveness of the new reading and writing initiative in the school, the focused teaching and the consistent and structured approach taken to its implementation are commended. It will be essential to monitor pupil progress very closely. To augment the literacy initiative, it is recommended that ongoing attention be given to the development of the pupils' oral language skills and the provision of personal reading. Consideration should also be given to reviewing the early reading practices in the school to ensure that they are matched to the pupils reading readiness levels.
- According to the pupil questionnaires, most pupils feel that they are doing well at Mathematics. Similarly parents are happy that their children are doing well. It was evident during the evaluation that pupils enjoy mathematics lessons and exhibit good levels of engagement. However, teachers are aware that learning outcomes in Mathematics require significant improvement and to this end a number of effective teaching approaches have recently been put in place on a school-wide basis. These include a focus on mental Mathematics, the use of a wide range of concrete materials, clear explanation of concepts and some collaborative and differentiated group activities. In the infant and junior classes increased attention is being paid to pupils' learning in number and good emphasis is placed on problem-solving in many of the classes.
- It is recommended that teachers continue to use these effective approaches but to ensure that they are informed by a clear picture of each pupil's knowledge and understanding. These pupil profiles should clearly inform the objectives for learning, the approaches to differentiation and to revision and consolidation in each class. The type of support materials to be used and the links across mathematical topics and the links to

real life mathematics should also be clearly defined. A balance between whole-class, group activities and discovery learning will enhance the learning for the pupils.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education (PE) is very good. The programme is broad and balanced and lessons are well structured, well managed with appropriate emphasis placed on pupil participation and enjoyment. There is a clear focus on skills development and very good resources are used effectively.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Scoil Treasa Naofa is an inclusive school and the welfare and care needs of the pupils are a key priority. The HSCL co ordinator, together with the principal and staff provide very good support to the pupils. A central focus in the HSCL plans is to build on the current involvement of parents in the schools' literacy initiative and to endeavour to involve more parents in their children's learning.
- Structured learning support for pupils is provided primarily using an in-class approach and good collaboration exists between class teachers and the Special Education Needs (SEN) team. A good range of resources is used in these settings, the rapport between teachers and pupils is very good and pupil engagement levels are high. While acknowledging that the current SEN arrangements in the school are relatively new, there is scope for further development in relation to provision. Focused, specific education programmes should be developed for both individuals and groups of pupils that are based on clearly defined measurable targets, particularly for those pupils below the tenth percentile in literacy and numeracy. Diagnostic testing should be used more effectively to establish baseline information and regular focused monitoring should be a feature of the SEN practice in all settings.

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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 Scoil Treasa Naofa welcomes the report of the Inspectorate and wishes to thank them for carrying out this inspection following the Board of Management's request for a Whole School evaluation. The Board of Management also wished to acknowledge and thank the inspectors for the supportive and professional manner in which the evaluation was carried out. The Board also appreciates the affirmation received in the report with regard to:

- The respectful, polite and courteous manner of our pupils.
- The strong level of commitment and care evident within management and staff.
- The quality of teaching and classroom management.

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 and staff acknowledge the recommendations made in the report. We plan to use the recommendations to inform our School Improvement Plan and to form the basis of our School Self Evaluation process.