

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St. John's National School
Ballybrack,
Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 19960M

Date of inspection: 03 December 2012



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

1. Introduction

St. John's National School operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It caters for 147 pupils from junior infants to sixth class. In addition, one teacher is deployed to the Early Start pre-school initiative. The school participates in the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). Attendance in the school is generally good although a small number of pupils are absent for more than 20 days. Strategies are in place to promote regular school attendance and overall attendance levels are 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:

- St. John's National School is an inclusive school and the quality of support for pupils is very good.
- The principal and staff work diligently and are committed to the welfare of pupils and the continued improvement of their learning.
- The board of management and parents are very supportive of the school.
- A very good range of resources for teaching and learning is provided and purposefully used by teachers.
- The school is praised for the introduction of a range of initiatives to support pupils' learning and other needs.
- The management of pupils is good. Pupils generally are well behaved and present as interested learners.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- 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. This should include analysis and use of assessment information at class and individual levels.
- The principal and in-school management team should further develop their curriculum leadership roles in order to improve teaching and learning and to foster reflective and self-evaluative practices on a whole-school basis.
- To maximise pupils' involvement and engagement in learning, teachers should provide a broader range of learning experiences for pupils, including a focus on collaborative group work, skills development and discovery learning.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very supportive of the work of the school. It is properly constituted, meets regularly and carries out its duties efficiently and competently. Members of the board demonstrate good awareness of achievement levels at the school.
- The school is lead by a dedicated and diligent principal. His priorities as principal are to improve literacy and numeracy standards among all pupils and to promote a culture of professional dialogue, collaboration and reflection at the school. He demonstrates a keen awareness of the individual talents and skills of his teachers and his interactions with members of the school community are respectful. The in-school management team (ISM) demonstrate commitment to the school and undertake their assigned responsibilities diligently. These duties should be reviewed regularly in line with Circular 07/03 and reconfigured to reflect the school's identified literacy and numeracy priorities. Formal meetings of the ISM team should be held regularly.
- Classrooms are well resourced and resources are managed and used purposefully by teachers. Classroom environments are pleasant and stimulating. Staff members at the school are commended on their interest and engagement in regular professional development. In light of recent staff changes further opportunities for teachers to share good practice should be developed. The support provided by the ancillary staff makes a significant contribution to the life of the school.
- The management of relationships with the school community is very good. Formal parent/teacher meetings are held once a year, written reports are issued to parents at year-end and parents in some classes are given a monthly newsletter of class events. In the parent questionnaires almost all parents responded that the school was welcoming of them. The school has a parents' association which is actively involved in supporting the work of the school.
- Overall the management of pupils is good and pupils generally are well behaved and present as interested learners. Teacher pupil interactions are respectful and supportive. Effective use of individual behaviour plans was observed across the school. The ongoing development of whole-school behaviour strategies is praised.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- Praiseworthy progress has been made in the development of a range of policy and planning documents across organisational, curricular and pastoral areas. As part of the school's DEIS planning process action plans have been formulated for literacy, numeracy, attendance and parental involvement. To optimize 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 very good. Commendable features of practice include the identification of specific learning objectives, a focus on skills development and provision for differentiated learning activities. Consideration should be given to the further use of monthly progress records to monitor continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

- The school has begun the process of school self-evaluation. Standardised tests results have been collated and some analysis carried out. The principal and the ISM team should further develop curriculum leadership skills to improve teaching and learning and to foster reflective and self-evaluative practices on a whole-school basis.
- 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 overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well-planned by teachers and are differentiated to cater for the pupils varying abilities, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In the questionnaires almost all pupils responded that teachers explained lessons clearly. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively. To maximise pupils' involvement and engagement in learning, more emphasis on collaborative group work, skills development and discovery learning is needed. Some fine examples of assessment of pupils' progress are in evidence. To secure sustained improvement in pupils' learning outcomes and achievement, the implementation of a consistent, whole-school approach to assessment is recommended. This should include comprehensive analysis of assessment information at class and individual levels.
- Tá múineadh na Gaeilge mar thosaíocht fhorbartha ag an scoil i mbliana. Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach ag an bhfoireann i leith na Gaeilge agus tá fonn orthu í a fheabhsú. Baineann na hoidí úsáid as raon maith de mhodhanna múinte oiriúnacha agus tá siad ag déanamh iarrachtaí an Ghaeilge a úsáid mar theanga chumarsáide sna ranganna i rith an lae. Tá stór focail oiriúnach ar eolas ag na daltaí. Ar an iomlán, cuirtear an iomarca béime ar an téacsleabhair áfach. B'fhiú aird a dhíriú ar na tréimhsí cumarsáide agus deiseanna níos mó a thabhairt do na daltaí an teanga iomlán a úsáid agus a chleachtadh go cumarsáideach. Moltar an plean scoile nua-athbhreithnithe a chur i bhfeidhm go seasta tríd an scoil agus monatóireacht chúramach a dhéanamh ar dhul chun cinn na ndaltaí. Moladh an príomhoide as na ranganna Gaeilge a chuirtear ar fáil do na tuismitheoirí
- *The school has prioritised the teaching of Irish for development this year. The teaching staff demonstrates a positive outlook towards Irish and an interest in improving standards. They use a good range of appropriate methodologies and they are focussing on increasing the use of Irish as a means of communication throughout the day. Pupils generally demonstrate suitable vocabulary development. Caution is advised in relation to over-reliance on textbooks. It is recommended that greater attention be given to the communicative approach with pupils being provided with additional opportunities to communicate regularly in Irish. It is recommended that the recently formulated school plan for Irish should be implemented consistently and the progress of pupils systematically monitored and reviewed. The principal is commended for delivering classes to parents in Irish*
- The school is praised for its introduction of a range of initiatives in the promotion of pupils' reading and writing skills. A thematic approach is adopted to the teaching of oral language. Oral language is effectively integrated across the curriculum and pupils generally can discuss a range of topics with interest. In some classes pupils recite a range of rhymes and poems. Careful efforts are made by teachers to ensure that pupils are reading at instructional level and questionnaire results demonstrate positive attitudes to reading. Analysis of standardised tests results indicate that improvements in reading standards have been achieved. To secure sustained improvements in literacy a more integrated and incremental whole-school approach to literacy development is

recommended. To this end a review of practices in relation to poetry, spelling, penmanship and structure of writing is required.

- The overall quality of teaching in Mathematics is good. Some examples of effective practice observed include maths-rich environments, use of Ready, Set, Go Maths and Maths Recovery strategies, clear explanations, due emphasis on mental mathematical activities and opportunities for pupils to explore concepts through the use of manipulatives. Pupils generally demonstrate appropriate understanding of concepts. To ensure sustained improvement in pupils' achievement there is need to extend these good practices on a whole-school basis. Specifically, clarification on agreed whole-school approaches to problem-solving, use of mental maths across the strands and regular monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress are recommended.
- Competent practice is evident in the teaching of History. The teaching approaches in use include use of artefacts, project work, personal history, photographs and ICT. In a number of classes, timelines are used effectively to enable the pupils' sense of chronology. History is integrated very well with literacy. Overall, pupils display satisfactory understanding of work previously completed. The recently-formulated school plan for History provides useful guidance for teaching and learning and will support the incremental development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of History, including local history.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school and the quality of support for pupils is very good. The principal and staff are committed to the welfare of pupils and the continued improvement of their learning. The school is praised for the introduction of a range of initiatives to support pupils' learning and other needs. SCP funds activities including play therapy, snack club and homework club. Through HSCL parents are enabled to support their children's learning through their involvement in a wide range of school-based activities. A well-planned Early Start programme is successfully delivered to pre-school pupils.
- Lessons in special education settings are based on identified needs and positive teaching and learning outcomes are in evidence. A comprehensive policy on pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has been developed. It provides clear guidance on the specific roles of all staff members and incorporates the staged approach. SEN teachers prepare carefully to meet the needs of their pupils. Overall, targets contained in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Pupil Learning Programmes (IPLP's) are specific and provision is made for regular review. Consideration should be given to including the voice of pupils in IEP's. All parents should receive copies of their child's IEP. Records of pupils' IEPs from year to year should be retained in the school.

Published May 2013.

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 welcomes the report of the Inspectorate following the Whole School Evaluation conducted at the end of 2012. The Board acknowledges the professionalism of the Inspectors throughout the evaluation process. We welcome the acknowledgement by the Inspectorate of the strengths inherent in the work of the school and in particular the diligence of the Principal and the staff and the support given to the school by parents.

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 acknowledges the recommendations made and are fully committed to their implementation as part of the Board's commitment to the development and maintenance of high standards in the context of an inclusive and forward-looking educational environment.