

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St. Agnes Primary School
Crumlin, Dublin 12
Uimhir rolla: 20014W**

Date of inspection: 20 January 2011



1. Introduction

St. Agnes' Primary School, Crumlin, has twenty-six teachers and operates under Catholic patronage. It is co-educational to 1st class and girls only from 2nd to 6th classes. The school has DEIS band 1 status, thirteen mainstream classes, an early start programme and a significant support team of nine teachers. Improvements in attendance levels have been achieved, though a significant number of pupils continue to miss more than 20 school days per year. The school has put in place a number of suitable actions and targets to address this issue. 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 quality of supports for children in the school is very good.
- Pupils' learning in the Arts is of a high standard as exemplified through the Visual Arts programme and the school orchestra.
- The school has recently achieved success in raising attainment levels in reading and Mathematics.
- The principal is an excellent administrator and manager who strives to develop the pupil holistically and to nurture their self esteem.
- The management of pupils is excellent; they are respectful and well behaved.
- Collaboration, collegiality and teamwork are strongly evident in the school.
- Communications between the school and its community are very good.
- Excellent resources are provided and these are used productively.
- The school building is maintained to a very high standard and provides a warm comfortable learning environment.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Teachers should ensure that the structure of all lessons incorporates a substantial teaching and consolidation phase.
- A whole school programme for the teaching of oral language skills should be developed outlining targets for each class level.
- In Mathematics, teachers should use a variety of strategies to ensure that pupils have a thorough understanding of mathematical skills and concepts appropriate to their ability particularly in the area of measures.
- Ongoing assessment of learning outcomes should become part of each teacher's regular practice and the outcomes should be used to inform planning.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In Irish, teachers should focus on the development of the pupils' capacity to communicate in the language at an appropriate level of challenge in each class. |
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3. Quality of School Management

- The Board of Management is very supportive of the work of the school. Members' commitment is exemplified by the range of training courses availed of. The board has delineated a clear vision for the school. It is recommended that literacy and numeracy standards become part of the board's deliberations. The board also needs to review its policies on the enrolment of very young children and the retention of pupils in the best educational interests of the children.
- The principal is a highly organised administrator who carries out the management role very effectively. She has fostered the school's links with parents and the wider school community and has ensured the creation of a very supportive environment in the school. She collaborates very effectively with members of the In-School Management (ISM) team. Duties assigned to ISM team members pertain primarily to resources and administration and are carried out effectively. It is recommended that these duties be reviewed to ensure that curriculum leadership is developed.
- Management in the school has worked effectively to develop the school's place at the heart of the community. Excellent relations with parents are evident. The development of school orchestras which involve pupils, parents and members of the wider community is a significant strength. The school communicates effectively with the parents through regular newsletters and through formal and informal parent teacher meetings. The results of parent questionnaires indicate, however, that most parents are unaware of the work of the Board of Management. The board is advised to develop strategies to address this issue.
- The quality of resources available to teachers is excellent. They are managed very effectively. Teachers are highly commended for their work in that regard. As more Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilities are provided in the school, detailed consideration should be given to the use of computers by pupils to support their learning.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. Planning is collaborative, with the principal and members of the ISM playing a significant role. Administrative policies provide excellent guidance in relation to the day-to-day running of the school.
- Self-evaluation procedures have had a positive impact in the school. The school's DEIS action plan is commendably clear; appropriate targets for improvements in attendance, and attainment in literacy and numeracy have been set. Considerable work has been completed in compiling curriculum plans. While these are satisfactory, further consideration should be given to detailing teaching strategies to be employed to achieve specific learning targets. In that regard, the approach taken to planning for Mathematics could be used as a template for other subject areas.
- Teachers use agreed planning templates to underpin practice in classrooms. Individual teacher planning is satisfactory and addresses content, objectives and resources to be used. As a means of building on this, teachers should link their planning with whole school planning and the setting of targets for each class and group level.

- Each teacher maintains a monthly record of progress (*cuntas míosúil*). It is recommended that the *cuntas míosúil* is used as a mechanism to assist teachers in consolidating previously-taught concepts and skills across the curriculum.

Child protection policy and procedures

School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department's Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory. Significant and successful efforts are made to foster the holistic development of the pupil, with a particular emphasis on their artistic development. Teachers work diligently and conscientiously. Classroom management skills are excellent. Particular efforts have been made to enhance the learning environment.
- In continuing to review teaching methodologies employed in the school, it is recommended that further consideration be given to ensuring direct teaching and consolidation phases in some curriculum areas. Some good examples of group work are evident and this practice could be extended. Ongoing assessment of learning outcomes should become part of each teacher's regular practice and the outcomes should be used to inform planning.
- Moltar na hoidí as ucht an timpeallacht dearfach atá sa scoil don Ghaeilge. Baintear úsáid as dea-raon áiseanna le linn na gceachtanna. Ag an am céanna, tá dúshlán nach beag ann sa scoil maidir le forbairt chumais na ndaltaí i labhairt agus i ngnéithe eile na teanga. Moltar clár foghlama bíseach a chur i bhfeidhm. B'fhiu do na hoidí díriú isteach ar fhorbairt scileanna na ndaltaí ó bhéal ag léibhéal oiriúnach i ngach rang. Moltar scileanna bunúsacha léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta a fhorbairt, bunaithe ar an gclár ó bhéal.

Teachers are commended for creating a supportive environment for the Irish language. A good range of resources is used in lessons. Nonetheless, there are significant challenges facing the school in developing the pupils' ability to communicate in Irish. A programme of learning encompassing a spiral approach should be employed. Teachers should endeavour to develop the pupils' capacity to communicate orally in the language at an appropriate level of challenge in each class. Consideration should be given to developing basic reading and writing skills based on completed oral work.

- The quality of teaching in English is good. A number of literacy programmes have been successfully initiated as part of the DEIS programme. Recently introduced initiatives such as team teaching will benefit the pupils. Some significant improvements in reading have been achieved in the current school year. Good work is noted in the development of early reading skills. As the pupils progress through the school it is recommended that consideration be given to use of existing resources to develop group reading programmes. Oral language provision outlining targets to be achieved at each class level should be devised. Regular writing opportunities are provided to pupils and due regard is

given to the teaching of spelling and grammar. To enhance overall writing quality, it is advised that genres be explored more systematically and that pupils engage in redrafting their work based on teachers' feedback.

- The quality of mathematics lessons is satisfactory. Pupils engage in assigned tasks which are monitored appropriately. Where practice is effective, teachers spend considerable time teaching the concept at hand, reinforcing and consolidating this work and ensuring a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Significant improvements in attainment on standardised tests are noted. Notwithstanding these improvements, however, many pupils display an insufficient grasp of some previously taught mathematical concepts and skills, particularly in the strand of measures. In that regard, there is a need to place significantly more emphasis on the regular consolidation of completed work.
- Some very good examples of co-operative work and integration with other areas of the curriculum are noted in the teaching of Visual Arts. Completed work is very attractively displayed around the school. The school has designated two available classrooms as art rooms and these are well used. Planning and resource provision for the Visual Arts are of a very high standard. The pupils' local environment is used effectively in lessons. Of particular note is the attention paid to the development of the pupils' self-assessment skills.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Eight full-time teachers and fourteen additional resource hours provide support to children with a range of learning needs. Acknowledging the small number of pupils warranting special class placement under the strict terms of Circular 9/99, the imminent change in the school's support for pupils with low incidence special needs, initiated by the SENO, is timely. This move from special class placements to resource hours allocation based on evidence of appropriate diagnosis is fully in line with special education policy.
- Most of the support teachers have been assigned a range of duties which encompass learning support, resource support and language needs. Support teachers collaborate effectively with their mainstream colleagues in planning their work. Strategies employed are effective and most of the children supported are progressing academically and socially. The resources available to support teachers are excellent and are used appropriately.
- Realistic learning targets are set for the pupils using assessment and other data. Provision for newcomer children is very good. Supports available from a range of services (including HSCL, SCP, SNAs, psychological services and the school's ancillary staff) significantly benefit the school, its pupils and parents.

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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 welcomes the report and acknowledges the professional manner in which the team carried out the evaluation. The Board views the report as a mandate for ongoing development of the school.

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

- A whole school programme for the teaching of Oral Language Skills has been initiated and is currently being developed.
- Our curriculum policy re Maths is being reviewed and developed
- Ongoing assessment of learning outcomes in order to inform whole school planning is targeted for the school's Deis Plan Year 4.