

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

St Gabriel's National School
Cowper Street, Dublin 7
Uimhir rolla: 20035H

Date of inspection: 30 January 2014



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

1. Introduction

St. Gabriel's National School is a vertical, co-educational school located in Cowper Street, in North Dublin city. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and participates in Delivering Educational Improvement in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. There are currently 142 pupils enrolled in the school of which a significant majority are pupils for whom English is an additional language. Attendance levels are improving in line with the school's DEIS targets. 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 and staff ensure that a high quality education is provided for all pupils.
- The principal promotes a caring and inclusive school environment and successfully nurtures team work and distributed leadership among the staff.
- The in-school management team effectively supports organisational and curricular development and the regular monitoring of DEIS initiatives in the school.
- Teachers work reflectively in a collaborative manner to deliver effective and stimulating lessons.
- There is consistent improvement in pupils' attainment in both literacy and numeracy skills.
- The quality of home-school communication is very good and parents are highly supportive of the school.
- The pupils are well behaved and apply themselves enthusiastically to their learning.
- Special educational interventions are delivered in a warm and engaging manner, with a specific focus on in-class support.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Ní mór taithí léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a shaibhriú sa Ghaeilge agus níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt dóibh scríobh go neamhspleách (*Pupils' reading experience in Irish should be enriched and more opportunities afforded them to engage in free writing*)
- There is scope to further develop pupil self-assessment practices across the curriculum.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions very effectively. A strong sense of common purpose is evident among board members. The chairperson maintains a regular visible presence in the school. The board plays an active role in policy development. Individual board members share their skills generously. School accounts are certified annually. Consideration should be given to the circulation of an annual report to ensure that all parents are informed of the work and achievements of the board.
- The principal leads and manages the school in a very competent manner promoting a caring and inclusive school environment. She is ably supported by the in-school management team who perform an appropriate range of organisational, pastoral and curriculum leadership duties. While there is some rotation with respect to teaching responsibilities, it is advised that a staff allocation policy be devised to enable professional development and to promote a wider sharing of skills.
- The school is well resourced and well maintained. Prudent investment has been made in a good range of resources to enhance teaching and learning. All teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning. Ancillary staff contributes significantly to the efficient functioning of the school.
- The management of pupils is very good and the teachers are clearly committed to both their pastoral care and holistic development. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation all parents indicated that their children are well looked after in the school. The pupils' behaviour during the evaluation was excellent. They apply themselves very well to their learning.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and are involved in many valuable school initiatives. The school operates a range of formal and informal modes of communication with parents. The parent representatives acknowledged the approachability of staff as a key strength of the school.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning is commendable. Practical and user-friendly curricular and organisational policies have been devised. The staff regularly engages in self-evaluation practices, with commendable emphasis on reflective practice in the domains of numeracy and literacy. It is recommended that some targets in the school's improvement plan for numeracy be more closely aligned to pupil learning. The whole-school plan for Irish should be further developed to include language delineation and progression from class to class across the key curricular themes.
- The quality of classroom planning is good with some examples of very good practice in evidence. Content is clearly delineated in a progressive manner. Consideration should now be given to including specific learning objectives and making more explicit provision for pupil self-assessment, methodologies, linkage and integration. A common approach to the recording of monthly progress records has been established. However, greater detail is required in some instances.
- 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 teaching and learning is very good. Teachers present well-structured and differentiated lessons and make provision for paired activities, group work and a variety of assessment methodologies. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills continue to improve in line with school DEIS targets. Some very good examples of pupil self-assessment was observed. Consideration should now be given to extending this good practice and enabling the pupils to engage in both peer and self-assessment across all curricular areas.
- Ar an iomlán, baintear caighdeán maith amach i múineadh agus i bhfoghlaim na Gaeilge. Tá timpeallacht shaibhir cruthaithe don teanga sa scoil. Déanann na hoidí iarracht mhacánta an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Úsáidtear straitéisí foghlama gníomhacha chun an teanga a mhúineadh. Tá foclóir cuí ag cuid mhaith de na daltaí agus éiríonn leo abairtí simplí a chumadh agus ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt bunaithe ar na téamaí faoi chaibidil. Moltar béim sa bhreis a leagan ar fhoghaim rann agus amhrán. Ní mór scileanna léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Moltar, leis, taithí léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a shaibhriú trí úsáid rialta a bhaint as leabhair leabharlanna simplí, as úrscéalta Gaeilge agus as áiseanna oiriúnacha. Moltar, freisin, níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí scríobh go neamhspleách.
- *In general the teaching and learning of Irish is of a good standard. A rich language environment is established in the school. The teachers make a sincere effort to promote the Irish language. Active-learning approaches are used to teach the language. Many pupils have acquired an appropriate vocabulary and succeed in composing simple sentences and asking and answering questions based on the themes discussed. It is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on the learning of poems and songs. Pupils' reading skills should be further developed. It is also recommended that the pupils' reading experiences be enriched through the regular use of simple library books, novels and suitable resources. Pupils should be afforded additional opportunities to engage in free writing.*
- The quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. In the infant and junior classes, the teachers make good provision for the development of phonological awareness and the acquisition of language. Across the school, effective use is made of poetry to foster and develop language and enrich the pupils' writing skills. Explicit teaching of specific reading skills to differentiated reading groups and targeted in-class interventions is ensuring pupils' attainments in literacy are improving. Very high quality provision is in place for the writing process across the school and pupils are enabled to express themselves in a range of writing genres. To further extend pupils' oral language abilities attention should be given to the identification and teaching of subject specific language.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. Lessons have a definite structure, making very good provision for the active involvement of pupils. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the progressive development of mathematical skills effectively connecting content to the pupils' life experiences. The school environment is suitably presented as a mathematics-rich environment. Very good differentiation practices are in operation to meet the needs of pupils' various abilities. The school has successfully embarked on a number of pedagogical initiatives including Lesson Study, station teaching and Maths Recovery to further develop standards in numeracy.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is very good, being effectively delivered in both discrete and integrated settings. Lesson content is very successfully connected to the pupils' life experiences, making very good

provision for discussion, collaboration and group work. Story and circle time are used creatively to provide pupils with opportunities to examine themes and topics relevant to their own identity, their family and the wider world. Particular emphasis is placed on the implementation of anti-bullying strategies and the Stay Safe programme. In questionnaires administered during the evaluation pupils indicated familiarity with the school rules.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. The SEN team, in collaboration with the class teachers, operate an effective in-class system of support for pupils. Interventions and support sessions are delivered in a very warm and nurturing manner, serving to both stimulate and engage pupils. Resources are used to very good effect. Standardised and diagnostic assessment strategies have been effectively used to devise individual educational programmes (IEP) which are closely aligned to pupils' needs. Overall, planning is of a very good quality. In some instances, short-term plans should be amended to provide greater scope for assessment and monitoring of pupil progress. While parents are consulted on the drafting of individual educational plans, it is advised that specific parental supports should be outlined in the IEP, a copy of which should be given to parents.
- The special needs assistants (SNA) work purposefully in co-operation with class and support teachers to meet the care and other needs of pupils.
- The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator works conscientiously to implement a wide range of initiatives which impact positively on the school. A central focus in the HSCL plan is to build on the current parental involvement in the school and ultimately to empower parents to establish a parents' association.

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 St. Gabriel's School is most pleased to welcome and endorse the findings set out in the Inspection Report.

The very positive findings are a most reassuring testimony to the committed, competent and professional work of the entire staff of the school.

The Board particularly wishes to recognise the leadership qualities and management skills of the Principal Teacher as well as the committed work of the Teaching Staff whose professional and admirable dedication contributed to a very reassuring confirmation of their teamwork. The support and cooperation of the ancillary staff has also made a most valuable contribution to the overall effective running of the school.

Confirmation of the great emphasis placed on the development of numeracy and literacy skills is noted with extreme satisfaction.

We are especially pleased to note the observations of the Inspectors that the pupils were worthy of special recognition for their courtesy and enthusiastic work ethic during their visit.

We welcome the affirmation of Parents and Pupils that the school fulfils their aspirations and is respectful of their rights.

While the report will be recognised as a snapshot in time, set in a broader landscape it may be viewed as a deserved tribute and clear validation of the progressive work of the staff over a number of years.

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 findings and recommendations set out in the report will now be incorporated into the ongoing self-evaluation process and will serve as a motivation and guide to direct our ongoing planning for excellence.

The Board assures the staff of its continued support in their work to achieve the goals and ideals set out in our child-centred Mission Statement.

We will continue to strive to ensure that our pupils will find enjoyment and fulfilment in the learning process in a secure, stimulating and happy environment where cultural diversity will be respected and cherished.

Ar aghaidh linn go léir le chéile.