

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Mother of Divine Grace National School
Ballygall, Dublin 11
Uimhir rolla: 20059V

Date of inspection: 16 October 2014



1. Introduction

Mother of Divine Grace National School is large, co-educational school which is located in Ballygall, Dublin 11. The school is under the trusteeship of the Sisters of the Holy Faith and the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school participates in *Delivering Equality in Schools* (DEIS) programme with band 2 status. It currently has 475 pupils in 17 mainstream classes and 30 pupils enrolled in the Early Start class for pre-school children. The school caters for pupils from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and a significant number of them do not have English as their first language. Careful attendance tracking and consistent implementation of the school's attendance strategies contribute to the predominantly positive attendance patterns. During the whole-school evaluation inspectors observed teaching and learning in twelve mainstream class settings and in seven support teaching settings. 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:

- An affirming, inclusive school ethos, characterised by commendable pastoral care and high quality provision for the holistic development of pupils, is in evidence.
- The board of management and parents' association effectively support the organisation and development of the school.
- The principal and in-school management team provide exemplary leadership and management.
- Staff demonstrates commendable commitment, enthusiasm and collaboration in their provision of high quality education for pupils.
- Teaching and learning in Mathematics and Science are particularly praiseworthy.
- Well-developed school self-evaluation practices and effective school improvement initiatives are in evidence.
- The well-motivated pupils demonstrate very good behaviour and engagement in learning activities.
- An extensive range of resources has been provided and is used effectively to support teaching and learning.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Chun cumas labhartha na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge a fhorbairt a thuilleadh, ní mór monatóireacht rialta a dhéanamh ar an bplean gnímh agus measúnú a dhéanamh ar thorthaí foghlama na ndaltaí. *To further develop pupils' oral skills in Irish it is recommended that regular monitoring of the action plan and assessment of pupils' learning outcomes be undertaken.*
- Further development of targeted, evidence based team-teaching is recommended to further enhance differentiated provision in literacy and numeracy.
- Further development of pupil self-assessment practices is recommended.

3. Quality of School Management

- Excellent leadership and management are in evidence in this school community. The proactive board of management supports the organisation and development of the school in a competent and conscientious manner. Its active involvement in policy review and its careful monitoring of school initiatives are commendable. School facilities and resources are maintained to a very high standard.
- The principal provides exemplary leadership and management. She nurtures an affirming and inclusive culture, characterised by high quality pastoral care for pupils' holistic well-being and positive communication with all partners. A suitable range of organisational procedures operates efficiently and effectively under her leadership. The principal works collaboratively with staff to optimise the learning experiences and outcomes for pupils. Effective team-building together with a capacity to empower others have contributed to the successful implementation of a significant number of improvement initiatives which impact positively on pupils' learning.
- The principal is ably assisted by a highly competent, dedicated deputy principal and a conscientious in-school management team (ISM). The daily meetings of the senior management team contribute significantly to the high levels of organisation and professional reflection which are in evidence. Post-holders' duties are closely aligned with school priorities and each post-holder leads a collaborative team of staff members who focus on the implementation and monitoring of specific curricular improvement initiatives. The willingness and capacity of other staff members to accept responsibility for a range of curricular and co-curricular activities is praiseworthy.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. Teachers are appropriately deployed and engage in regular professional development. Ancillary staff make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school. The internal school environment is well presented with vibrant curricular displays. The school has invested in two designated indoor areas which facilitate rich play-based learning for infant pupils and these are used regularly and purposefully. School and class libraries are well stocked and used effectively. The school garden provides an enriching outdoor learning environment. Information and communications technology is used judiciously to support teaching and learning throughout the school.
- The management of communications within the school community is very good. Responses to parent questionnaires, administered during the evaluation, indicate high levels of parental satisfaction with school organisation and provision for pupils. The dedicated parents' association plays an active and valuable role in supporting the work of the school.
- A range of effective systems has been successfully established to ensure a well-ordered, affirming learning environment which is respectful of the rights of the child. Pupils demonstrate very good behaviour and enthusiastic engagement in learning activities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and the school self-evaluation process is very good. A wide range of comprehensive whole-school curricular and organisational plans has been developed in a collaborative manner and guides practices within this school context. Strong links between whole-school planning and teachers' individual planning are in evidence in most instances. Planning documents reflect very good provision for

integration across curricular areas. Comprehensive monthly progress records are used purposefully to monitor continuity and progression throughout the school.

- School self-evaluation practices have been successfully embedded within the school community with evidence of positive impact from a suitable range of improvement initiatives. Qualitative and quantitative assessment data have been carefully analysed to determine appropriate whole-school improvement targets. To build on this very good work, further consideration should be given to refining school self-evaluation targets in terms of pupils' learning outcomes for particular class groupings. School personnel demonstrate the capacity to sustain high standards and secure ongoing improvements.
- 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

- Ar an iomlán, tá caighdeán na foghlama agus an teagaisc sa Ghaeilge go maith. Cothaítear meon dearfach i leith na Gaeilge trí bhéim inmholta a chur ar an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil. Baineann na hoidí usáid éifeachtach as raon oiriúnach de mhodhanna múinte agus léiríonn na daltaí tuiscint mhaith ar an teanga. Tá sé ar chumas formhór na ndaltaí struchtúr a chur ar abairtí simplí. Tá plean uile scoile leagtha amach chun na briathra a mhúineadh. Chun cumas labhartha na ndaltaí a fhorbairt a thuilleadh ní mór monatóireacht rialta a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm an phlean gnímh agus measúnú a dhéanamh ar thorthaí foghlama na ndaltaí. Léann na daltaí le cruinneas agus le tuiscint réasúnta. B'fhiú, ábhair léitheoireachta na ndaltaí a leathnú. Baineann caighdeán maith le saorscribhneoireacht na ndaltaí.
- *The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is good. A positive attitude towards Irish is cultivated through a praiseworthy emphasis on informal Irish. The teachers effectively use a suitable range of teaching methodologies and pupils demonstrate good understanding of the language. The majority of pupils are able to compose simple sentences. A whole school plan for the teaching of verbs has been devised. To improve pupils' oral skills it is necessary to regularly monitor the implementation of the action plan and to assess pupils' learning outcomes. Pupils read with reasonable understanding and accuracy. It would be worthwhile extending pupils' reading material. Pupils' independent writing is of a good standard*
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is high. The successful implementation of a number of purposeful improvement initiatives has impacted positively on the development of pupils' language and literacy skills. Very good provision is made for the development of pupils' listening and oral skills with due regard for the diversity of need. Differentiated reading material is provided for pupils and they demonstrate good accuracy, fluency and understanding in their literacy attainments. The school is commended for the recent adoption of a whole-school approach to the systematic development of pupils' independent writing skills across a range of genres. Greater use of pupil self-assessment approaches would augment pupils' editing and handwriting skills. Pupils demonstrate very good spelling strategies and attainments.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. The school has successfully undertaken a number of creditable initiatives to develop pupils' number concepts and mathematical skills through meaningful, cohesive, learning experiences. Very effective integration with other curricular areas and linkage across the

various strands of the mathematics curriculum is commendable. Lessons make very good provision for active learning and mathematical investigations. A strong whole-school emphasis on mathematical language and mental mathematics contribute to pupils' commendable number fluency. They demonstrate positive dispositions towards mathematics and very good learning outcomes commensurate with their abilities.

- The very good quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is underpinned by the characteristic whole-school ethos of care and affirmation. The principles of inclusion and equity permeate school culture and lessons delivered. Teachers skilfully deploy a blend of methodologies and resources to ensure pupils actively engage in appropriate learning activities. The effective use of role-play to develop pupils' skills to resolve conflict and manage their emotions is praiseworthy. Pupils demonstrate confidence and understanding in their discussions about the topics explored in this curricular area.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. The engagement of some staff members in ongoing professional development has positively influenced the design and successful implementation of whole-school enquiry-based initiatives. Pupils demonstrate very good understanding of key scientific concepts and a commendable mastery of scientific skills. Effective integration with other curricular areas, in particular mathematics, is commendable. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to transfer their learning to other contexts and to engage in make and design activities.
- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is high. A cohesive, effectively integrated learning experience is provided for pupils through well-prepared and suitably structured lessons. An appropriate range of methodologies is skilfully deployed by teachers to ensure lessons facilitate the development of pupils' positive dispositions, knowledge, understanding and skills. While provision for the differentiated needs of pupils is good, further improvement could be achieved through extending the use of targeted, evidence-based interventions in classes where there are high concentrations of lower-ability and higher-ability pupils. The assessment plan has been recently reviewed and the range of assessment approaches and tools used to monitor the progression of infant pupils is highly commended. There remains scope to extend pupils' self-assessment skills throughout the school.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The overall quality of learning and teaching for pupils with special educational needs. (SEN) is good with some very good practices observed during the evaluation. Provision is carefully organised to address a wide range of learning needs and to ensure early intervention. Teachers prepare individual or group plans for all pupils in receipt of support. The effective practice of specific target setting based on pupils' identified needs and the careful maintenance of progress records in learning programmes should be extended to all settings.
- A blend of withdrawal and in-class support is employed to support SEN pupils. The purposeful well-organised in-class interventions should now be extended to support pupils in senior classes. All lessons are well structured and are delivered in supportive, encouraging environments. Initiatives such as *Reading Recovery* have significantly enhanced pupils' progress. The effective use of ICT by some teachers promotes consolidation of key skills and concepts.
- Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) is effective, providing well-structured, activity-focused support. Greater use of assessment data to inform language proficiency benchmarks is advised in some instances.

- Commendably, additional support is provided for pupils of high ability. There is need to further reflect on the type of support that would best suit this group and the specific skills that require development.
- Early Start provision for pre-school pupils is very good. High quality teacher-pupil interactions are in evidence and play-based methodologies are used to optimum effect. Commendable attention is given to the incremental development of pupils' language skills and their learning dispositions.
- The school is commended for the quality of support which it provides for pupils who are experiencing significant emotional trauma and in particular pupils with refugee status.
- The Home School Community Liaison teacher supports the school community through the provision of a well-structured and strategic programme which enables parents to support their children and become more involved in school activities. Purposeful relationship building with pupils, parents and teachers ensures that all support is well informed and sensitively deployed.

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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 Mother of Divine Grace Primary School welcomes the very positive Whole School Evaluation Report and notes that it affirms the high standard of management, leadership, pastoral care, teaching and learning in our school. The report affirms the work ethic, the inclusive school ethos, collaborative spirit and excellence of teaching that underpin the high quality of provision in the school. This is indicative of the highly professional approach of the Principal, Deputy Principal and staff who work in a collaborative manner with the parents to ensure the optimum learning opportunities are provided for the children. Great credit must go to the pupils themselves whose behaviour and attitude to school work is exemplary. It is a source of immense pride to the Board of Management that both the responses of the parents and the pupils in the questionnaires indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

The Board wishes to sincerely thank the whole school community who contributed to the process. We acknowledge the professional and courteous manner in which the evaluation was undertaken.

We hope to build on our success and to use this excellent independent analysis of our work as a launching pad for greater achievements for our pupils and the whole school community.

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

We welcome the recommendations listed in the report. Team teaching is being developed in the senior classes and the action plan in Gaelige will continue to be monitored. Further pupil assessment strategies are being developed.

