

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Our Lady of Consolation School
Donnycarney, Dublin 5
Uimhir rolla: 200640

Date of inspection: 8 March 2012



A N R O I N N | **D E P A R T M E N T O F**
O I D E A C H A I S | **E D U C A T I O N**
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | **A N D S K I L L S**

1. Introduction

Our Lady of Consolation School operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school caters for girls and boys from junior infants to first class and for girls from second class to sixth class. There are five special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in the school. The school is included in Band 1 of the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. There are 214 pupils in the school. Attendance levels are very good. 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 school is managed by an active and dedicated board of management.
- In-school management is of a very high quality, led by a dynamic principal. He is supported ably by an in-school management team which works in a collaborative and focused manner.
- The quality of teaching and learning is highly commendable and pupils' attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are very good.
- Interactions between teachers and pupils, in both mainstream and special education settings, are very affirming and it is clear that pupils are content in this positive school environment.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- It is recommended that a more concise model be developed for teachers' monthly progress records.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive policy be devised to clarify more precisely the functioning of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme within the school, and specifically, the roles and functions of personnel involved.
- Tá scóip le béim sa bhreis a chur ar scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach sa Ghaeilge ar bhonn níos rialta. *There is scope for greater emphasis to be placed on creative writing in Irish on a more regular basis.*

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is highly committed to the school and works in a cohesive and strategic manner. The board meets regularly and plays an active role in developing school policy.
- The school is led by a very dedicated, enthusiastic and dynamic principal. He closely monitors pupil progress and the quality of educational provision with a view to the continuous development of pedagogical approaches. He is ably supported by the in-school management team which approaches its work in a very systematic and focused manner and which works collaboratively with all staff.
- Resources are managed very effectively. School finances are managed judiciously and all appropriate records are maintained. A very good supply of resources is provided to support teaching and learning. The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. Parents' representatives were forthright in their praise of the work of the school in both mainstream and special education settings. Questionnaire responses confirm the high levels of parental satisfaction with the education provided in the school.
- The management of pupils is very good. Teachers engage with pupils in a very positive and affirming manner. Pupils are clearly content in the school environment. This is confirmed in their questionnaire responses, which indicate that they are secure in school and that they believe they are making good progress.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of whole school planning is commendable. The school community works collaboratively to construct comprehensive plans for all curriculum areas and for a wide range of organisational areas. Very good self-evaluation practices are in operation in the school. Of particular note is the reflective self-evaluation instrument used by staff to identify barriers to effective classroom management, planning and teaching, in order to develop strategies to improve each of these areas.
- Teacher planning is commendable, being notably clear in the delineation of content. In some instances, there is potential to include greater detail of learning activities and of differentiation practices. Detailed monthly progress records are written. It is recommended that a more concise model be developed for these reports, taking account of guidance provided on the website of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (ppds.ie).
- 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

- Is léir go bhfuil dea-thoil ag an bhfoireann don Ghaeilge agus soláthraítear clár taitneamhach thar na snáitheanna curaclaim uile ag na rangleibhéil oiriúnacha. Baineann na hoidí feidhm as raon leathan d'áiseanna tarraingteacha agus as teicneolaíocht eolais

agus cumarsáide chun gníomhaíochtaí foghlama fiúntacha a eagrú. Tá struchtúr maith ag baint le ceachtanna Gaeilge, ina sonraítear ionchur teanga cuí agus béim ar fhorbairt scileanna. Baintear úsáid as modhanna múinte éifeachtacha chun deiseanna rannpháirtíochta éagsúla a chur ar fáil. Glacann na daltaí páirt go réidh sna gníomhaíochtaí a eagraítear. Tá raon inmholta d'amhráin, d'fhilíocht agus de rainn ghníomhacha ar eolas ag na daltaí tríd an scoil. Baintear dea-úsáid as drámaí beaga agus as obair bheirte chun deiseanna labhartha a thabhairt do dhaltaí. Déantar cúram maith de scileanna feidhmiúla scríbhneoireachta a fhorbairt. Tá scóip le béim sa bhreis a chur ar scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach ar bhonn níos rialta. D'fhéadfaí samplaí de shaothar na ndaltaí féin a úsáid freisin mar ábhar léitheoireachta breise, maraon le sleachta de dhearadh na n-oidí.

It is clear that the staff is well disposed to Irish and an enjoyable programme is provided across all curriculum strands at the appropriate class levels. Teachers make use of attractive resources and of information and communications technology to organise worthwhile learning activities. Good structure is evident in Irish lessons, in which suitable language input and emphasis on skills development is noted. Effective teaching methods are used to provide a variety of opportunities for participation. Pupils take part readily in the activities organised. Pupils throughout the school know a commendable range of songs, poetry and action rhymes. Good use is made of short plays and of pair work to give pupils opportunities to speak. Good attention is paid to the development of functional writing skills. There is scope for greater emphasis to be placed on creative writing on a more regular basis. Samples of the pupils' own work could be used as additional reading material, in addition to pieces designed by the teachers.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English are of a very high quality. Highly commendable teaching approaches facilitate high quality collaborative learning by the pupils. Very effective assessment practices are used to monitor pupils' attainment at every level. The formal and informal assessment instruments used show that pupils are making very good progress. Discrete oral language lessons are taught. Well-structured and sequential programmes are employed very effectively to develop writing skills. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and audiences and learning outcomes are highly commendable. Commendable use is made of effective guided reading strategies. Very good use is made of poetry during lessons.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is very good. The school and individual classrooms are presented in a mathematics-rich manner. Lessons are very well structured, placing suitable emphasis on the use of concrete resources and collaborative learning. Content is effectively linked to the environment and life experience of pupils, and parental involvement is used effectively to support Maths for Fun activities. Mathematical language and mental arithmetic are developed in a systematic manner. Overall there is suitable provision for differentiation, with some high quality examples noted during the evaluation. Very good provision is in place for integration and linkage, particularly between data, number and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. Some mainstream class teachers and special education teachers have developed high quality approaches to developing problem-solving skills. It is recommended that the school explore the dissemination of such good practice.
- The history curriculum is delivered in a structured and effective manner. Lessons make good use of resources, including photographs and artefacts, to stimulate pupil interest and to develop their skills as historians. Pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively and to discuss topics related to time and chronology and cause and effect. Their research skills are developed effectively, and their interviews of people in the community and other visitors to the school contribute significantly to their high quality project work. There is a very good emphasis on local history. Consideration might now be given to the development of a school museum.

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good throughout the school. Resources are used in a highly effective manner to create well-organised learning activities. Lessons are well paced and pupils show high levels of purposeful participation during lessons. Teachers monitor their work carefully, and assessment practices are very effective, particularly in English and in Mathematics. In recent times the school has embarked on an immersion project in literacy and numeracy which focuses on differentiated approaches rooted within intensive learning activities. It is recommended that the school examine possibilities for extending some of the key principles of this programme to other classes within team-teaching contexts.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. Positive commitment to inclusion underpins the learning experiences provided to pupils attending support teachers and to those in the five special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs). There are many fine examples of good quality classroom planning, incorporating time-bound and measurable learning targets. To contribute further to the very good quality planning the inclusion of defined success criteria should be considered. In the case of some class plans, time linked targets could be beneficially included. The development of social, communication and life skills is central to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) planning process for pupils with ASDs. Baseline assessment on a range of skills is used effectively to sequence skill building activities and to record acquired skills. Parents are gainfully consulted and regular feedback ensured.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions in support settings is highly commendable. Very good attention is given to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Effective, carefully-prepared and structured lessons were evaluated. A wide range of autism-friendly approaches and methodologies is deployed consistently within the special classes. These include TEACCH, visual schedules, individual timetables, work routines, motivational targets, modelling, Social Stories and elements of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA). In keeping with best practice, clear and unambiguous language of instruction is used, along with visual cues, work schedules and purposefully structured learning environments to promote on-task engagement. A careful balance between individual and group work ensures opportunities for the rehearsal and consolidation of socialisation skills. Teachers endeavour to stimulate the pupils' desire to communicate, to indicate their needs and to make choices. Special needs assistants are properly deployed and work conscientiously under the guidance of teachers. A feature of the classrooms visited were the individual work stations which further assist in the development of pupils' independence.
- The quality of assessment practice in all support settings is very good. Detailed records of pupils' progress are maintained. Assessment is viewed as an ongoing process and the teachers record pupils' progress on an individual basis.
- The school has established good inclusion practices with pupils from the special classes. Currently pupils are included fully and partially in mainstream classes for a range of subjects including Visual Arts, Drama, English, Mathematics, Music and Physical Education.
- * The school shares the post of a Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator that is based in the adjacent boys' school. Services are delivered in a structured manner to enrich and develop pupils' educational experiences in the school. In order to develop provision in this area, it is recommended that a comprehensive policy be devised to

clarify more precisely the functioning of the HSCL scheme within the school, and specifically, the roles and functions of personnel involved.

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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 Our Lady of Consolation School welcomes the report, highlighting as it does the excellent standards of teaching, learning, management and planning in this school.

We acknowledge the professional and courteous manner in which the evaluation was undertaken. We are delighted that the Whole School Evaluation included the 5 Special Classes catering for children on the autism spectrum disorder (Orchard Classes).

The inclusion of the Orchard classes and the integration of these pupils into the mainstream classes for some subjects have made our school truly distinctive. This is due mainly to the great work of the Principal, Assistant Principal and staff. The BoM acknowledges the highly positive comments made by the Inspectors during the evaluation in these classes.

We are extremely pleased with the very high standards of attainment in the mainstream classes. This is indicative of the high professional approach of the teaching staff who work in a collaborative manner with the parents to ensure that 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, thus ensuring positive outcomes for everyone. 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 are so complimentary and praiseworthy of the workings of the school.

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.

We have drawn up a HSCL Policy which clarifies the functioning of the scheme within the school and specifically the roles and responsibilities of the personnel involved. The other recommendations in the report will be addressed in the coming school year.