

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Saint Ultan's Primary School
Cherry Orchard Avenue, Dublin 10
Uimhir rolla: 20092T

Date of inspection: 15 October 2015



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

1. Introduction

Saint Ultan's Primary School was established in 2006, and is part of a unique, integrated education and care facility co-located on one campus in Cherry Orchard, Dublin 10. Under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, the school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Band 1, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. English is an additional language (EAL) for a significant minority of the school's 422 pupils. The implementation of the school's attendance strategy impacts positively on pupils' punctuality. There exists, however, a cohort of pupils, whose attendance levels remain an on-going concern for school management. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in ten mainstream class settings and seven support settings. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wishes to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Provision for Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and Science was evaluated during the evaluation

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **key findings**:

- While the board of management actively supports the core values and priorities of the school, there is a need for further communication of its activities, and for it to avail of all supports to strengthen its governance capacity.
- The leadership of the principal is of a very high quality, and the in-school management team actively supports the development of the school.
- The teachers are highly committed to developing pupils' self-esteem and to cultivating a growing sense of their capabilities and potential.
- School improvement planning, and its implementation, is impacting successfully on the learning achievements of the pupils.
- A high number of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to school, and very good behaviour was noted during the evaluation.
- While provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very good overall, there is a need to review timetables to ensure optimal use of teacher contact time.
- A notable increase in the literacy levels of some pupils is evident and the school is working hard to develop pupils' oral communication skills.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board of management should avail of the supports available to strengthen its capacity in the governance of the school.
- Teachers should adopt a spiral approach to the use of oral language objectives, and should delineate a broad range of vocabulary and language to be taught explicitly across all curricular areas.
- The development of purposeful collaborative learning activities for pupils, and consistent opportunities to practise their language skills, is recommended.
- The full integrity of teacher/pupil contact time in respect of provision for pupils with additional and special learning needs should be ensured.

3. Quality of School Management

The overall quality of school management is good. The board engages effectively in policy development, and attends capably to the appropriate resourcing of the school. Cross-campus integration is identified by the board as a key priority for future development. School finances are certified externally. However, the election of a treasurer from amongst the board's members is recommended. While board meetings are convened regularly, these should be attended by appointed board members only. The board should explore the fact that responses to questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation indicated that a significant minority of parents and staff disagreed that the board keeps them informed about its leadership and management role in the school. To this end, it is advised that the board provide an agreed report to the school community after each meeting. The incoming board should avail of every assistance to support its governance role. Pupils' learning achievements should remain integral to the board's agenda.

- The principal works in an extremely committed manner and provides very high quality visionary leadership. The educational progress of all pupils and the provision of an educational experience that nurtures their sense of belonging and self-esteem are integral to this vision. The deputy principal and a proactive in-school management team provide effective and democratic leadership in many areas of school life. Teachers at all levels contribute generously to the development of the school.
- School accommodation is of a very high standard. In questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, all teachers agreed that facilities are good. Ancillary staff provide very good support. The special needs assistants are highly commended for the very effective manner in which they support the care and inclusion of particular pupils.
- The management of communications is good overall. In responses to questionnaires distributed to parents, a significant majority agreed that they feel welcome in the school and that they are satisfied with the meetings arranged for parents. The school successfully encourages parents to participate in short-term initiatives. Nonetheless, sustaining parental involvement over a longer period continues to be a challenge for the school.
- Team meetings are held monthly to facilitate cross-campus integration. However, under the provisions of Circular 14/04, pupils may be released at an earlier time only once per term to accommodate such meetings, and not monthly as is the current practice. It is recommended that the provisions of the circular are enacted without delay.
- The management of pupils is of a very high standard. In their responses to questionnaires, the majority indicated that they are positive about school. Structures to garner pupils' voice and nurture their leadership skills are well developed. Strategic planning ensures that an extensive range of beneficial co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences are provided for them. Commendably, all class levels have access to violin lessons, and many engage in performing arts activities at a very high level.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is good overall. Administrative policies are of a very good quality. An index list should be disseminated to all teachers to apprise them of the range of policies that are available.

- Some curricular plans are of a good quality, and the content to be covered by all classes is set out clearly for teachers. A strategic plan should be devised to manage the review of older policies.
- There has been proactive engagement with the school self-evaluation process. Target setting is linked to the DEIS action planning process. The school should continue to refine its targets, and engage in further exploration of the teaching and learning sub-themes in the *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines*.
- Most teachers provide good quality long-term plans. There is some variation in the quality of teachers' short-term planning. Where best practice was found, there was explicit use of curriculum objectives, vocabulary and subject-specific language were identified, and provision for differentiated approaches to meet varied learning needs of pupils was included. This good practice should be shared amongst the teaching team.
- 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commendable. Teachers deliver well-structured and stimulating lessons, and communicate high expectations for pupils' learning. While pupils have opportunities to work in a variety of organisational settings, there is potential to enable them to practise their language and communication skills through more widespread organisation of purposeful collaborative learning experiences.
- Tá scóip le forbairt i gcaighdeán na foghlama sa Ghaeilge. Baintear úsáid as réimse d'áiseanna chúil chun tuiscint agus suim na ndaltaí a chothú. Baineann na múinteoirí feidhm éifeachtach as amhráin agus as rannta chun taithí a thabhairt do na daltaí ar fhuaimneanna agus rithim an teanga. Tá foclóir réasúnta ag daltaí áirithe, ach ar an mórgóir, tá deachrachaí ag tromlach na ndaltaí abairtí simplí a struchtú. Chun muinín agus scileanna cumarsáide a fhorbairt, moltar clár córasach foghlama, bunaithe ar théamaí an churaclaim a dhearú agus a chur i bhfeidhm.
- *There is scope for development in the quality of learning in Irish. A range of suitable resources is used to foster pupils' understanding and interest. Teachers make effective use of songs and rhymes to give pupils an experience of the sounds and rhythm of the language. Particular pupils have a reasonable vocabulary, but overall, the majority of the pupils have difficulty in structuring simple sentences. To develop confidence and communication skills, an incremental learning programme, based on the curriculum themes, should be devised and implemented.*
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is commendable. The school implements and monitors intensive literacy interventions successfully, particularly in the infant and junior classes. A notable increase in the literacy levels of some pupils is evident. There is explicit teaching of comprehension strategies and writing genres across all classes. To optimise the benefits of these endeavours, further targeted provision for pupils in the middle and senior classes is advised. The school is working hard on developing pupils' oral communication skills. Effective use is made of poetry and rhymes to foster and develop a playful enthusiasm for language. To further enhance pupils' oral language competencies, teachers should adopt a spiral approach to the use of the oral language objectives from the curriculum, and explicitly teach target vocabulary across all curricular areas.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment in Mathematics is good. Analysis of assessment data indicates learning improvements for particular cohorts of pupils. The specific emphasis placed on the explicit and consistent teaching of problem-solving strategies and computation skills is proving to be very beneficial. The school operates well-chosen interventions successfully at particular class levels to cater for the diversity of learning abilities. Further analysis of assessment data is recommended to help plan and differentiate appropriately for the range of learners within and across streamed settings.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science are effective. Pupils in a number of classes demonstrate a good recall of lessons previously taught. They are enabled to develop interest and curiosity in their local environment through their engagement with fieldtrips and gardening activities. Commendably, the school is now prioritising a skills-based approach to the teaching of Science. To complement this approach, a balanced range of methodologies, including the provision of open-ended, active and collaborative learning activities for the pupils, should be devised.
- Appropriate assessment strategies are in place. Decision-making with regard to the effectiveness and continuation of particular intervention programmes is soundly linked to the analysis of assessment data.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very good overall. Where best practice was evident, effective analysis of assessment data and the delivery of targeted and purposeful lessons were observed. Opportunities to share this practice amongst the support-teaching team should be provided. A review of timetables in support settings is recommended to fully ensure an optimal level of teacher-pupil contact time. Teachers in the support settings share their experience and expertise for the benefit of the school by leading and supporting the implementation of intensive interventions. Very high levels of dedicated and careful co-ordination underpin this provision.
- All teachers are highly commended for their commitment to developing pupils' positive attitudes to school, and to cultivating a growing sense of their own capabilities and potential. Teachers have participated in training to support them in this role.
- The Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Unit caters for a pre-school, junior and a senior class. Provision for pupils is of a very high quality. Effective structures for integration are in place to facilitate pupils' inclusion and participation in school life.
- The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator work very effectively and arranges an extensive range of courses and programmes for pupils and parents.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The B.O.M. is, in general, pleased with the WSE report and notes that it affirms the dedication, hard work and commitment of the staff and the wider St Ultan's project. We are delighted that the commitment of the teachers to the development of pupil's self-esteem and emotional well-being is recognised. While it was acknowledged that St Ultan's is part of a unique integrated education and care facility we feel that the additional organisational and administrative implications should also be recognised. For example, the Chairperson also chairs the Care board, the B.O.M meets jointly with the Care board, the principal and management give a huge amount of time to integration, and staff meetings on integration are demanding but necessary. It should be noted that each student has an ICE (Integrated care and education) plan. We congratulate the Principal and Staff on the report.

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

- Déanfaidh an Coiste Gaeilge athbhreithniú ar an bplean scoile i leith na Gaeilge roimh cruinniú foirne na Feabhra.
- Cuirfear béim faoi leith ar phleanáil agus múineadh na Gaeilge ag cruinniú foirne na Feabhra. Eagrófar an cruinniú trí mhodh ceardlainne agus pléifear straitéis chun na deich dtéama a chur i bhfeidhm i gcomhthéacs curaclam teanga nua.
- Whole School short term planning template will be amended to ensure the inclusion and differentiation of curriculum objectives, vocabulary and subject specific language. Cuntais Mhíosúla will include the vocabulary and subject specific language used.
- The literacy Coiste are incorporating higher order reading strategies e.g determining importance, in the middle and senior end of the school. The WSA (whole school approach) to Oral language is being developed in line with 'First Steps, Speaking and Listening Programme' and the new language curriculum.
- Maths Coiste are currently in the process of analysing data from ongoing assessments. This will inform differentiation and the reorganisation of maths groups.
- SEN Timetables have been reviewed to ensure an optimum level of teacher/pupil contact time. Building capacity and the sharing of best practice amongst the Support team will be facilitated.
- Specific provision of open ended, active and collaborative learning activities is now being factored into the SIP for Science.
- The Principal is currently drawing up an index list of school policies for the Filleán Dubh. This will be ready for March Staff Meeting and will be distributed at this mtg
- The school acknowledges the difficulties in sustaining parental involvement. To support parents, the HSCL coordinator has created a new calendar of events, is providing training in Restorative Practice and is facilitating a newly appointed parents' association. She is also actively addressing the issue of poor attendance with a certain cohort.
- In relation to the B.O.M: Since the new board took up office it has begun presenting a monthly report of its meetings and work, one to the school staff by email and the other one to the parents and wider school community through a posting on the website. The outgoing BOM participated in governance training provided by Carmichael House and the incoming board had already organised this training.
- Cross Campus Monthly Integration Meetings: The Board intends to contact the Chief Inspector and/or Secretary General to discuss our unique requirements for these in-school cross campus meetings with a view to gaining DES permission to continue them.