

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**St John the Evangelist National School
Adamstown, Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla: 20194E**

Date of inspection: 16 November 2015



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

1. Introduction

St John the Evangelist National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It was established in 2007 to cater for the needs of the new community in Adamstown Strategic Development Zone. The school grew rapidly and English is an additional language for most of the pupil population. Overall, the attendance levels are good. Attendance levels for a small number of pupils are a cause of concern and it is advised that the school develop a range of strategies to improve attendance. During the whole-school evaluation, inspectors observed teaching and learning in nine mainstream classes and five support settings. The provision for Irish, English, Mathematics and Drama was evaluated. The board of management of the school 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 **key findings**:

- The whole-school community places significant emphasis on pastoral care and the holistic development of each pupil.
- A very effective, systematic whole-school approach to differentiation in the teaching of reading is well embedded.
- There is a collaborative whole-school approach to implementing the school's code of behaviour and the pupils are responding very well to this approach.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs and additional learning needs is excellent.
- Teachers are committed to fostering an enthusiasm for writing and this could form a foundation for independent writing in Irish and English.
- Appropriate communication channels between home and school have been established, and should now be leveraged in policy development and school activities.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A cyclical whole-school approach to the development of independent writing in Irish and English should be developed.
- The school should develop whole-school processes to directly involve parents in policy development and school activities.
- A wider range of collaborative teaching methodologies should be further explored to allow pupils take a more active role in their learning.

3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is commended. The board is committed to the continuous development of the school and conscientiously works on providing an inclusive education for all pupils. Finances are carefully monitored and minutes of meetings are recorded clearly. A report to inform the school community of its work should now be published and circulated annually. Questionnaires administered to teachers during the evaluation indicated that all teachers agree that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that the school is well run.
- The principal provides high quality leadership to the school community. He places significant emphasis on pastoral care and nurturing an affirming and inclusive school environment. He works collaboratively with the committed deputy principal and he is highly supportive of the continuous professional development of the staff. He is supported by a dedicated in-school management team who fulfil their duties conscientiously and thoroughly. A collaborative regular review of these duties reflecting the school's priorities is recommended.
- The school's resources are managed well. The school building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. Classrooms and corridors are attractively presented with colourful displays of the pupils' work. Teaching resources are carefully selected, maintained and utilised to enhance lessons. The school is commended for the investment in acquiring a range of graded reading material. The school has a well-resourced computer room, however, its use as a teaching and learning resource should be furthered developed. Ancillary staff provide high quality support to the school. The special needs assistants (SNAs) are very effective in providing for pupils' care needs and supporting their inclusion in school life.
- The management of pupils is very good. There is a whole-school approach to implementing the schools' code of behaviour and the pupils are responding very well to this. Responses to pupil questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that almost all pupils feel safe in their class and like their school.
- Effective communication channels between home and school have been established to ensure parents are well-informed about the school and their children's progress. The school is currently prioritising the development of home-school links. Responses to parent questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that parents are happy with the school. There is a need to involve parents more directly in the development of whole-school processes, policy development and school activities.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The overall quality of school planning is good. A range of appropriate curricular and administrative policies are available and provide good direction to teachers in relation to curriculum delivery. Further connections between the intercultural policy and other curriculum subjects should be explored.
- The overall quality of classroom planning is good. Teachers have worked on developing comprehensive short-term plans and this is particularly effective in the planning for

guided reading. The potential to use the monthly progress report in reviewing curriculum implementation should be developed. The documentation of pupils' learning outcomes in these reports is recommended.

- Engagement in the school self-evaluation process has impacted successfully on selecting and implementing specific approaches regarding the teaching of reading and Mathematics in the school.
- 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 overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is commended. Lessons are well structured and paced. Creative use of teaching methodologies in many classrooms are effective. To optimise this good practice, a wider range of collaborative teaching methodologies should be further explored to allow pupils take a more active role in their learning. Pupils engaged enthusiastically, they listened well and were eager to share their learning. The implementation of Aistear is effective. Features of very good practice involved the development of language through pupil-led play-based learning and there is potential to extend this approach in the infant classes.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge go maith. Baintear úsáid as reimse strateisí chuí agus cuirtear béim éifeachtach ar an gcur chuige cumarsáideach. Léiríonn formhór na ndaltaí go bhfuil said in ann abairtí a struchtúru agus ceisteanna a fhreagairt. I ranganna áirithe, aithrísítear rainn agus amhráin le muinín agus moltar an dea-cleachtas seo a leathnú tríd an scoil. Léann formhór na ndaltaí le tuiscint agus b'fhiú anois úsáid a bhaint as raon níos leithne téacsanna. Is léir go bhfuil scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil in úsáid ar an mórgóir agus moltar go gcuirfí béim ar scríbhneoireacht neamhspleách na ndaltaí a fhoirbairt.
- *The overall quality of teaching and learning in Irish is good. A range of appropriate strategies is used and effective emphasis is placed on the communicative approach. The majority of pupils display an ability to structure sentences and answer questions. Songs and poems are recited confidently in certain classes and this good practice should be extended throughout the school. The majority of pupils read with understanding and it would now be worthwhile to make use of a broader range of texts. Functional writing is evident for the most part and it is recommended that emphasis be placed on developing pupils' abilities to write independently.*
- In English, teaching, learning and pupil achievement is of a high quality. The development of pupils' oral language competencies is a priority for the school. A spiral approach to the selection and use of the content objectives from the curriculum is advised, to underpin planning for language activities in the classroom. The school is commended on the commitment of all teachers to improve reading. A very effective systematic and strategic whole-school differentiated approach to the teaching of reading is well embedded. Pupils display an enthusiasm for reading and read confidently at their instructional level. Teachers are fostering an enthusiasm for writing and a whole-school cyclical approach to the incremental teaching of specific writing genres is advised. To

further involve the pupils as active participants in their learning, greater provision for collaborative methodologies is advised.

- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good. Emphasis is placed on the teaching of mathematical language and pupils are confident in using the correct terminology. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge of basic number facts and competency in number operations. Concepts are clearly explained and appropriate use is made of concrete resources to guide pupils' learning. Mathematic displays linked to pupils' life experiences are evident throughout the school. While some pupils displayed confidence in their individual approach to problem solving, there is need however to develop collaborative approaches with a focus on developing mathematical skills. Further provision for differentiated learning outcomes to support and challenge a range of learners is advised.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Drama is effective. A range of appropriate methodologies is used competently. Lessons were successfully integrated with other curriculum subjects and linked well to previous learning. Pupils actively participated in role-play, freeze frames, circle work, and drama games. To further develop this practice the extension and development of the elements of Drama should be explored during post-drama discussion.
- The overall quality of assessment is very good. The teachers employ a range of summative and formative assessment strategies. A wide range of screening, diagnostic and standardised tests to establish pupils' learning needs is used. Pre-intervention and post-intervention assessment practices are used effectively. Teachers have introduced self-assessment and peer review strategies and further development in this area would be worthwhile.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Support for pupils with special educational needs and additional learning needs is excellent. An adaptive holistic and pupil-centered model comprising a careful balance of in-class support and withdrawal of pupils is developed, implemented and co-ordinated very effectively. Specific and targeted teaching guided by the diagnosed needs of the pupils was evident. Pupils were challenged, displayed high levels of sustained engagement and related very well to their lessons.
- A collaborative process involving teachers, parents and SNAs leads to the planning and implementation of very effective Individual educational plans. Effective use of assessment data and the setting out of specific, measurable and time bound targets for the pupils learning is evident.
- The quality of support for pupils' well-being is very good. The holistic development of pupils is nurtured through a wide range of learning experiences. This is characterised by a clear focus on self-esteem, participation in various programmes and significant involvement in sporting events. A strong emphasis on the inclusion of all pupils is evident. The school is very sensitive to instances of disadvantage and supports pupils and families discreetly.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St John the Evangelist N.S. welcomes the affirmative report received from the Inspectorate which has highlighted the inclusive, productive and supportive learning environment created by teachers, support staff and pupils working together.

The Board welcomes the recognition of teachers' commitment to attain high standards and the consequent high quality teaching and learning that is evident throughout the school.

The Board commends pupils on actively engaging with their learning as well as the positive interactions with fellow pupils and staff that are evident. The school will develop the roles of parents as partners as discussed.

The Board of Management wishes to thank all the partners involved in making St John the Evangelist N.S. a caring, happy, inclusive and high quality learning environment.