

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation
REPORT**

**Queen of Angels National School
Sandyford,
Dublin 16.**

Uimhir rolla: 19723V

Date of inspection: 14th January 2015



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

1. Introduction

Queen of Angels National School is a Catholic co-educational school catering for 233 pupils from junior infants to sixth class. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in School (DEIS) Programme with Band 2 status. The school has one Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). A range of strategies is in place to promote attendance and punctuality. Absences are carefully tracked and the HSCL co-ordinator and principal work closely with the families of pupils whose attendance is poor. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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 are commended on the welcoming and supportive school atmosphere.
- The principal demonstrates exemplary levels of commitment and leadership in the performance of her duties.
- The work of the in-school management (ISM) team contributes substantially to the effective running of the school and to aspects of teaching, learning and pupil achievement.
- Teachers are highly conscientious and work diligently in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The management of pupils' behaviour in classrooms is very good and positive behaviour and high levels of engagement in lessons were observed.
- The support provided by the special needs assistants (SNAs) and ancillary staff makes a very significant contribution to the life of the school.
- Parents actively support the work of the school.
- There is good willingness and ability among the staff and board members to improve the learning outcomes of pupils, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and to address the challenges facing the school into the future.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- To maximise pupils' involvement and engagement in learning, teachers should provide a broader range of learning experiences for pupils including a focus on collaborative group work, skills development and discovery learning.
- To secure sustained improvement in the pupils' learning outcomes and achievement, it is recommended that structures be put in place to ensure the consistent implementation and systematic monitoring of agreed programmes and initiatives. This should include the further use of both assessment of learning, and assessment for learning approaches, and the comprehensive analysis of assessment information at whole-school, class and individual levels.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To assist parents further in supporting their children's education consideration should be given to extending parental involvement in a number of classroom-based school activities, including the curriculum areas. |
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3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is very supportive of the school. The chairperson and other board members have a long association with the school. Regular well-structured meetings are held, minutes are recorded and the accounts are audited. In addition, the chairperson visits the school frequently to offer support to the principal and staff. Clear roles and duties are assigned to board members and these are carried out enthusiastically, efficiently and competently.
- The principal demonstrates exemplary levels of commitment and leadership in the performance of her duties. She demonstrates a keen awareness of the individual talents and skills of her staff and her interactions with members of the school community are respectful. The in-school management team (ISM) undertake their assigned responsibilities diligently and enthusiastically and their work contributes substantially to the effective running of the school and to aspects of teaching, learning and pupil achievement. The priorities of the principal and ISM team include the improvement of literacy and numeracy standards and the promotion of a culture of professional dialogue, collaboration and reflection in the school.
- The school building and its environs are very well maintained. The school is praised for the cultivation of a school garden, sensory area and outdoor classroom. Resources are well managed and used purposefully by teachers. Classroom environments are pleasant and stimulating. In light of recent staff changes and the introduction of a range of new initiatives further opportunities for teachers to share good practice should be developed. The support provided by the SNAs and the ancillary staff make a significant contribution to the effective operation of the school.
- The school operates an open-door policy to parents. In the parent questionnaires almost all parents said the school is welcoming of them. The school communicates effectively with parents through a wide range of channels, including, frequent newsletters, school website, text-a-parent service, regular parent-teacher meetings and annual reports.
- The school has a parents' association which is actively involved in supporting the work of the school. The home school community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator works diligently to foster meaningful home school relations. She communicates effectively with local agencies and has successfully organised a range of courses and activities for parents. Parents are included in some in-school activities such as cookery and assemblies. To assist parents in further supporting their children's education, consideration should be given to extending parental involvement in a number of in-school classroom-based activities including the curriculum areas.
- The management of pupils is very good. During the evaluation positive behaviour and high levels of engagement in lessons were observed. Rules, routines and expectations are explained clearly and understood by all and on display in the classrooms. In the pupil questionnaires almost all pupils responded that they felt safe in class and almost all pupils responded that they could get help from their teacher or other adult if they felt they were being bullied. For the small number of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour, plans have been developed and the support they receive over time enables them to cope better and

self-regulate their own behaviour. The ongoing development of whole-school behaviour strategies is praised.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The board, principal and staff have been involved in the development of a range of policy and planning documents across organisational, curricular and pastoral areas. As part of the school's DEIS planning and school self-evaluation process, action plans have been formulated for literacy, numeracy, attendance and parental involvement. All teachers engage in long-term and short-term planning and complete monthly progress reports. It is important to ensure that all teachers' planning fully reflects the overall school plan, DEIS plan and the agreed whole-school strategies and approaches.

Child protection policy and procedures

- 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

- Teachers are highly conscientious and work diligently in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. Resources are employed purposefully during lessons. Features of practice include teacher-led talk and discussion, effective questioning and clear explanations. Pupils demonstrate good levels of interest in lessons. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively. To maximise pupils' involvement and engagement in learning more emphasis on collaborative group work, skills development and discovery learning is needed. Staff recognise that further development in literacy and numeracy is required and a number of initiatives and approaches have been agreed and begun to be implemented.
- Some fine examples of the assessment of pupil progress are in evidence. To secure sustained improvement in the pupils' learning outcomes and achievement, it is recommended that structures be put in place to ensure the consistent implementation and systematic monitoring of the agreed programmes and initiatives. This should include the further use of assessment of and for learning approaches, and comprehensive analysis of assessment information at whole-school, class and individual levels.
- Sa Ghaeilge, tá cáilíocht na múinteoireachta go maith. Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach ann i leith na Gaeilge agus tá fonn ar na hoidí í a fheabhsú. Baintear úsáid chruthaitheach as raon straitéisí oiriúnacha chun suim na ndaltaí a mhúscailt. Cé go bhfuil foclóir oiriúnach ar eolas ag na daltaí agus tá an chuid is mó díobh ábalta ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt bunaithe ar théamaí éagsúla, b'fhiú béim níos láidre a leagadh ar fhorbairt scileanna cumarsáide na ndaltaí agus deiseanna níos mó a thabhairt dóibh an teanga a úsáid agus a chleachtadh go cumarsáideach. Cleachtar an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil go rialta.
- *The quality of teaching in Irish is good. There is a positive outlook towards the teaching of Irish and an interest in improving standards. The teachers creatively use a range of suitable strategies to generate pupil interest. Even though pupils demonstrate appropriate vocabulary development and most of them can ask and answer questions based on various themes, it is advised that a greater emphasis be placed on developing communicative skills*

with pupils being provided with additional opportunities to communicate in Irish. Reading and functional writing are practised regularly.

- A key challenge for the school is to raise standards in literacy. Teachers make good efforts to foster the pupils' oral language skills but significant development is still required. Specific targets for the development of discrete oral language skills should be identified and a range of appropriate strategies put in place. The school is praised for its introduction of a range of initiatives in the promotion of pupils' reading and writing skills.
- A well-planned power hour for literacy is successfully delivered in the senior infant and first classes. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and a range of books for personal reading is made available through the class and school libraries. Pupils engage in a range of writing genres. Their work is corrected by teachers and positive feedback is given. It will be important for management and staff to continually monitor and track the impact of initiatives in English on pupils' learning.
- The school has acknowledged that achievement in Mathematics requires attention. A whole-school focus on the teaching of number facts and mental maths has led to an improvement in pupils' accuracy in carrying out mathematical operations. Some effective mathematics teaching was observed including the purposeful use of concrete materials, clear explanations, appropriate pitching of content and engagement by pupils in problem-solving activities. Where a sense of achievement was experienced, pupils displayed positive attitudes to Mathematics. To ensure sustained improvement in pupils' achievement, there is need to extend these good practices on a whole-school basis. Specifically, clarification on agreed whole-school approaches to the teaching of mathematical language, problem-solving and regular monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress are recommended.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Science is high. A broad programme is implemented. Lessons are well structured, concepts are explained clearly and teachers direct the learning activities carefully. Pupils are afforded opportunities to develop skills of observation, prediction and recording. Pupils would benefit from further opportunities to explore scientific concepts through investigations and experiments working independently of the teacher. The school participates in a range of science initiatives including the Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme, Tidy Schools in the Community and the Green Schools Programme. Through participation in these initiatives and the ongoing work in the school garden, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas and their understanding of the importance of environmental awareness and care is successfully developed.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school and the quality of support for pupils is very good. The principal and whole-school staff are committed to the welfare of pupils and the continued improvement of their learning. The school is praised highly for the introduction of a range of initiatives to support pupils' learning and other developmental needs, including the nurture room, the outdoor classroom, the sensory area, the activity breaks between lessons and the gymnastics lessons during break-times. The school recently received a Yellow Flag award for its inter-cultural work. In addition the School Completion Programme (SCP) provides funds for activities such as the breakfast club, the homework club and also for sports coaches.

- The support teachers are highly dedicated and prepare carefully to meet the needs of their pupils. Lessons in support settings are based on identified needs and positive teaching and learning outcomes were in evidence. Five SNAs work very effectively in collaboration with the class and support teachers to meet the care needs of pupils with special educational needs.