

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT
Our Lady's Grove Primary School
Goatstown Road, Dublin 14
Uimhir rolla: 19374W

Date of inspection: 1 May 2013



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

1. Introduction

Our Lady's Grove Primary School is a Catholic coeducational primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. It is under the trusteeship of the sisters of Jesus and Mary. The attendance of the 422 pupils enrolled is generally 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's inclusive, child-centred, caring ethos
- The strong leadership of the board of management
- The dynamic, vibrant leadership of the principal and her integrity and commitment to the holistic development of the children and their learning
- The broad range of effective teaching skills and curriculum expertise
- The laudable sense of teamwork, support and collaboration among staff members
- The pupils' positive interest in learning and their engagement in their work
- The very supportive parents' association and parent body
- The new school building enhanced through fine displays of pupils' work.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Whole-school approaches to assessment for learning should be agreed and assessment data used systematically to guide greater differentiation of teaching and learning activities.
- It is recommended that communication between home and school be strengthened and increased account be taken of parental and pupil perspectives on school matters.
- There is a need for the school to re-envision planning as a process focused on bringing about improvements. As part of this school improvement process, the role of the in-school management team as curriculum leaders should be further developed.

3. Quality of School Management

- The members of the board of management demonstrate strong leadership and a clear understanding of their role. Among the board's priorities are the formulation of a strategic plan to guide the future development of the school, the improvement of communication structures and the provision of support for the school's self-evaluation processes. As part of this process, an auditing, and further development as necessary, of the school's

enrolment policy, code of behaviour and anti-bullying policies and the health and safety statement is advised. The updating of the external certification of accounts and presentation of an annual report on the work of the school are underway.

- The dynamic, vibrant leadership of the principal and her integrity and commitment to the holistic development of the children and their learning are commended. Her vision for the school is as a community of learning and she demonstrates a clear understanding of the skills and abilities of individual staff members. She is capably supported by a dedicated and flexible in-school management team (ISM) who demonstrate a broad range of skills. To develop further the impact of curriculum leadership in the school the following are advised: (i) clarity of curriculum targets and content (ii) support for implementing and monitoring of the impact of initiatives on the pupils' learning and (iii) formalising of ISM decision-making processes.
- Pupils' positive interest in learning and their engagement levels are highly commended. Some very good examples of the management of pupils were in evidence and the establishment of a student council to promote articulation of pupil voice is praised. Further development of pupil voice could be achieved by exploiting more fully opportunities for collaborative work, sharing the learning objectives with the pupils, and developing further their ability to reflect on their learning.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and their representatives acknowledge the willingness of staff to meet and discuss their child's progress as needed. While responses of parents surveyed indicate that almost all are happy with the school overall, their responses also point to a need to strengthen home-school links. To help achieve this, improved communication and additional parental involvement in the work of the school and in policy formulation and review are recommended.
- The management of resources is very good. The bright new school building is enhanced through attractive displays of the pupils' work. A very good range of teaching and learning resources is used effectively. Some effective use is made of ICT as a teaching resource. Consideration should now be given to the increased use of ICT by pupils.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- A school plan has been formulated with some detailed whole-school curriculum plans. An openness to school self-evaluation at management and staff level is evident. To improve the overall usefulness of planning, there is a need for the school to re-envision planning as a process focussed on bringing about improvements. In this regard, clearly defined improvement targets should be set out, informed by relevant information; strategies and approaches for improvement should be identified; and provision should be made for monitoring the implementation and impact of various initiatives on pupils' learning .
- The quality of individual teachers' planning varies and in a number of instances does not provide sufficient guidance for teaching and learning. Teaching and learning would benefit from a clearer focus on the intended learning objectives, skill development and specific provision for differentiation.
- 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

- I bhformhór na ranganna, tá caighdeán na foghlama agus gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith. Sonraíodh samplaí de chleachtais den chéad scoth i rith na measúnaithe. Sna ceachtanna sin, bhí cinnteacht agus dea-struchtúr ag baint leis an gclár teagaisc; comhtháthú an-mhaith idir na snáitheanna; béim ar an bhfíorchumarsáid; daltaí gníomhach san fhoghlaim; úsáid cluichí, amhrán agus dánta; saibhreas agus cruinneas an mhúinteora i labhairt na Gaeilge agus dearcadh dearfach na ndaltaí i leith na Gaeilge le sonrú. Tá riar maith éagsúlachta le sonrú maidir le cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge ar fud na scoile áfach. Moltar díriú ar seo mar ábhar práinne.
- *In most classes, the standard of pupils' learning and achievement in Irish is very good. Some very good examples of practice were evident during the evaluation. In such cases there was clarity and a good structure to the teaching programme; very good integration of the strands; emphasis on authentic communication; pupils' active participation in learning; use of games, songs and poems; richness and accuracy of the teacher's spoken Irish and a noticeable positive attitude of the pupils to the Irish language. However, there is considerable variation with regard to the quality of teaching and learning in Irish across the school. It is recommended that this be addressed as a matter of urgency.*
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is very good. Provision for early literacy development is commendable and some purposeful monitoring and tracking of individual pupil progress, particularly in writing, is evident. Overall, pupils express themselves with competence and confidence and the development of their ability to articulate their views, to debate and to discuss a wide range of topics is praised. Reading standards generally are very high. To build on this work, further attention to the variety and interest levels of material is advised. Some commendable examples of pupils' personal writing across a range of genres are evident.
- Considerable developments have taken place in the teaching of English in recent years. The school is well placed to use the school self-evaluation (SSE) framework to achieve even higher standards. One of the challenges of SSE will be the monitoring of initiatives and their impact on pupil learning. In using the SSE process, attention should be given to the following; clearly defined targets focused on skills development in reading and writing for each class level taking account of information of pupils' attainment to date; and clear identification of strategies and approaches needed to ensure ongoing improvements.
- Overall, pupil attainment in Mathematics is very good. Some features of very effective teaching noted during the evaluation included emphasis on oral maths work, collaborative problem solving, purposeful use of resources, active learning opportunities and discussing and applying Mathematics to real life problems. In order to ensure that pupils are challenged at appropriate levels, there is scope to develop further the use of assessment information to plan for and deliver differentiated programmes of work in Mathematics. Consideration should also be given to providing additional opportunities for the development of pupils' mathematical thinking and problem-solving abilities through increased use of planned discovery learning opportunities.
- Music is a central feature of life in Our Lady's Grove Primary School and pupils are provided with a varied and interesting musical experience throughout their time in school. School assemblies are used productively to celebrate musical achievements of individuals and groups of pupils. The participation of all pupils in musical events is valued and encouraged and pupils demonstrate high levels of interest in the variety of learning activities provided. Pupils' skills of listening and responding to music are fostered

appropriately across a range of classes. The quality of the pupils' recorder playing is praised, as is the promotion of their musical literacy skills.

- A broad range of effective teaching skills and curriculum expertise was evident among the staff during the evaluation and the overall learning experiences for pupils are very good. Aspects of good practice included well structured and implemented lessons and the provision of opportunities for pupils' active engagement in learning and in the development of their understanding, knowledge and skills. Responses from pupil and parent questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching. In the ongoing development of teaching and learning, the provision of opportunities for teachers to regularly share good practice and the enhancement of whole-school approaches to formative feedback are advised.
- Some examples of effective assessment of learning were evident in individual classes. The challenge for the school is to develop a whole-school approach to assessment for learning across the curriculum. In so doing, the information from assessment should be used systematically to inform school priorities and the planning and delivery of programmes of work in line with the needs and abilities of individuals and groups of pupils.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- Pupils in Our Lady's Grove Primary School experience an education in an inclusive, child-centred environment. Overall provision for pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good. Teachers are praised for the collegial, supportive approach to provision of support for pupils and some effective examples of team-teaching approaches are evident. It is advised that this aspect of provision be extended. Lessons are well designed and teacher/pupil interactions are encouraging and supportive. An extensive range of resources is used to support pupils' learning, including ICT. The pupils engage productively in a broad range of learning activities. Positive pupil progress is in evidence, including the development of their self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- Education plans are formulated for all pupils in receipt of support and a comprehensive range of diagnostic tests is administered to identify learning needs. In devising individual learning targets attention should be afforded to ensuring that, in all instances, the specific outcomes of assessment are appropriately reflected and that plans are reviewed regularly in consultation with parents, and pupils where relevant. In reviewing provision, further consolidation and formalisation of the following are advised; stage one of the staged approach to support for pupils and the recording of pupil progress.

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's Grove Primary School would like to thank the inspectorate for the professional and courteous manner in which the Whole School Evaluation was conducted. This professionalism enabled the core spirit and ethos of Our Lady's Grove Primary School to emerge and be absorbed.

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

The Board of Management acknowledges and accepts the findings of the report which affirmed the day to day life of the school. Its recommendations will be central to this year's action plan for school improvement.