

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	Carysfort N.S.
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Convent Road Blackrock Co. Dublin

Date of Evaluation: 19-10-2016

Date of issue of report: 20-12-2016



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION?

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. These inspections affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school. In addition to evaluating management and leadership in the school, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and Geography.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of leadership and management
2. Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. Quality of support for pupils

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

Whole-School Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	19-10-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to senior management team and teachers,• Feedback to parent representatives• Feedback to board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Carysfort NS is a large co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The staff consists of 20 mainstream class teachers, 6 Learning Support/Resource teachers and one administrative principal. Interviews for a new deputy principal were due to take place at the time of the evaluation. Enrolment has grown substantially and the current enrolment is 544 pupils. Attendance is generally very good.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of leadership and management is very good; the principal and board of management provide very effective and purposeful leadership and they are capably supported by an active and enthusiastic Parents' Association.
- The school environment is welcoming, supportive and inclusive.
- Teaching is of a high quality with some very commendable practices; there is scope to use assessment information further to inform the teaching practices.
- High quality learning outcomes are being achieved with some pupils achieving at very good levels in summative assessments: pupils are very interested and motivated to learn.
- The focus on improving teaching and learning in problem-solving, English comprehension and independent writing is proving successful.
- Provision for pupils with special education needs (SEN) is commendable; the proposed review of the SEN school policy will create a very good opportunity to strengthen the quality of target setting and identify how the resources of the team could be maximised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers use assessment to identify the next steps in learning, to plan for differing abilities and to modify their teaching approaches to optimise pupil participation and response.
- In providing for pupils with special educational needs, it is recommended that learning targets are specified and assessed more clearly and that early intervention, team-teaching and in-class support models are further extended and developed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The board of management and the principal, in collaboration with all members of staff, promote an inclusive school culture and provide a safe, healthy and welcoming environment.
- Board members carry out all aspects of their duties very conscientiously and the quality of their work is highly commendable. The board capably manages policy formation, the school finances and maintenance issues and is very supportive of the staff. The expansion of the school to accommodate the children in the immediate catchment area is a particular focus of the board at this time. The board works diligently to ensure that all legislative and policy requirements are met. To support the school's active engagement with school self-evaluation, the board could now take a more active role in reviewing curriculum developments and educational standards.
- The principal provides strong and purposeful leadership and is a highly visible presence in the school. She is committed to promoting high standards, to providing a broad and holistic learning experience for the children, to ongoing improvement and effective communication. The in-school management team carries out their duties successfully and provides valuable support to the principal. Collaborative planning is encouraged and working groups have been established. Developing the leadership capacity among the staff to lead learning will be a key priority as the school grows and changes.
- The principal and board manage human and physical resources very effectively. Teachers are deployed to make good use of their skills and to support newly qualified colleagues. The special needs assistants are effectively organised to give support to pupils with additional needs. The secretary and caretaker make a valuable contribution to the smooth operation of the school. Classrooms are very well resourced and a variety of pupils' learning achievements are attractively displayed in common areas and in classrooms.
- The school actively promotes and supports parental involvement and currently has a very enthusiastic and hard-working Parents' Association. Significant monies have been raised to enrich the ongoing implementation of the curriculum. Ensuring that all parent voices are heard is a priority for the parent association and classroom representatives, surveys and parent social nights all contribute to this listening objective. Responses to the questionnaire administered during the evaluation indicate that parents are happy with the school and the open-door approach in place is very much appreciated.
- Effective two-way systems of communication have been established between home and school. The parents' association spoke highly of the mutually respectful relationships fostered between staff and parents and particularly praised the teachers' availability to meet with them. To build on this work, some consideration should be given to increasing the level of consultation with parents about children's learning and progress.
- The management of pupils is highly commendable. A comprehensive and positive code of behaviour is implemented successfully. Pupils are encouraged to take on a range of

responsibilities during their time in school and the variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for building their personal and social skills. It is evident from the pupil questionnaires submitted as part of the evaluation, that while children are happy and secure, there is a need to provide more opportunities to strengthen the pupil voice.

- 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*.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- Whole-school plans for Geography, Mathematics, Irish and English usefully inform planning for progression through the school.
- Effective collaborative planning is in place and staff members plan together at the various class levels. All teachers use an agreed template for short-term planning. The quality of this individual planning varies from satisfactory to very good. Further attention should be given to planning for the use of resources and relevant activities to match learning intentions and to meet the differing learning needs.
- The principal and other leaders in the school enthusiastically lead the school improvement process. Teachers have successfully engaged in the process and there is evidence in the children's work of the impact of the improvement strategies in use. Focused monitoring of the implementation of the school improvement plans will give clear indications of success and provide direction for the next steps in the process.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is high with some very high standards evident in both the teaching practices and the learning outcomes. The very good teaching practices include a focus on higher-order skills, the effective use of resources, deep engagement in the learning, the provision of appropriate learning activities and a careful balance between teacher input and pupil input. The extension of these very effective practices is recommended. Some good examples of differentiating the learning activities for pupils and of facilitating independent and collaborative work were also observed. The regular provision for learning through play in the infant classes is highly commended. Further reference to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* will support the development and improvement of this practice. Recent initiatives, such as the station teaching for Mathematics, are proving successful. Learning environments are very good and pupils are highly motivated and interested in learning.
- In the parent questionnaires administered as part of the evaluation, almost all of the returns indicated that teaching was good in the school and the pupils in their questionnaires agreed that teachers explained concepts well and helped the pupils to improve their work.

- *Ar an iomlán tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge ar chaighdeán ard. Múintear amhráin, rainn, dánta agus foclóir go rialta agus dá bharr, tá an-chuid de struchtúir na cainte agus frasaí ar eolas ag na páistí. Chomh maith leis sin, cruthaíonn na hoidí réimse maith de dheiseanna cainte chun an fhíorchumarsáid a fhorbairt. Is léir go bhfuil dearcadh dearfach ag na hoidí agus ag na daltaí i leith na teanga agus an chultúir. Cabhraíonn Seachtain na Gaeilge agus an teagaisc trí Ghaeilge in ábhair áirithe leis an líofacht agus leis an gcumarsáid a fhorbairt. Tá forbairt ar an nGaeilge labartha aitheanta go cuí ag an scoil mar réimse feabhsúcháin uile scoile agus tá an chéad tuairisc scoile scríofa ina leith seo.*
- Teaching and learning in Irish is of a high quality. The regular teaching of songs, rhymes, poems and vocabulary through the medium of Irish has facilitated the acquisition of good language structures and phrases. Similarly, teachers have provided a good range of speaking opportunities. Pupils and teachers are very positively disposed to the Irish language and Irish culture. The annual *Seachtain na Gaeilge* celebration and the teaching of individual subjects through Irish, supports fluency and the application of the language skills. The progression of oral Irish language skills has rightly been identified by the school as an area for whole-school improvement and an initial school report has been completed
- High standards are evident in the teaching and learning in Mathematics with pupil achievement in summative assessments, including standardised tests, at very good levels. To support the varying needs and abilities in Mathematics, class programmes should be further differentiated with learning tightly scaffolded as required. Among the good teaching practices observed were well-structured lessons, with a focus on mathematical language and problem-solving strategies and very good resources. A comprehensive programme in early number is in place in the infant classes that is very beneficial. Extending pupils' opportunities to engage in mathematical thinking and enquiry-based learning is advised in order to build pupil confidence and deepen their engagement with mathematics.
- Very effective practices are in place for teaching particular aspects of the English programme. The majority of the children read to a very high standard, use an extensive vocabulary and are familiar with a range of poetry. Early literacy skills are taught competently at the infant level and the agreed approach to the teaching of phonics has been very successful. As the reading programme continues to evolve, consideration should be given to engaging children with a wider variety of reading texts to meet the differing interests and abilities in reading. The standard of handwriting is excellent. A particular focus has been placed on improving outcomes in independent writing and comprehension skills in recent years. While pupils are familiar with the various writing genres, they require further opportunities to write for different purposes and to apply their writing skills in regular free writing tasks.
- Suitable provision has been made for teaching and learning in Geography. The school plan commendably outlines an incremental approach to the topics to be covered. Pupils are developing a sense of place and are learning to contrast their own place with that of others. They engage in a range of project work and are generally knowledgeable about the content taught. The teaching and learning were most effective where topics were integrated with other subjects and where a skills focus was to the fore. The acquisition of additional practical resources for the teaching of geography should facilitate the development of a greater range of geographical skills.

- A wide range of assessment practices is in use. These include summative assessments (teacher-designed and standardised) and a variety of assessment *for* learning strategies. Commendably some baseline data has been collated. How all this information is used to inform and modify teaching and learning activities varies. It is recommended that teachers use assessment to identify the next steps in learning, to plan for differing abilities and to inform their teaching approaches to optimise pupil participation and response.

3. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The holistic development of each child is clearly articulated in the school's ethos and mission statement. Policies and procedures promote the inclusion of all pupils and the wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities enrich the pupils learning experiences
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language is commendable. Support teaching is primarily organised on a withdrawal basis where lessons are structured appropriately and delivered in an affirming and positive manner. Some in-class interventions for mathematics and reading/comprehension have been initiated and are proving successful. The teacher-pupil interactions are very good and contribute to building the pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. While classroom support plans and individual education plans have been developed in some cases there is scope for more specific target setting and recording of progress. Support teachers consult regularly with class teachers and with parents and the handover meeting at the end of each school year and the daily report notebook are highly commendable practices. The proposed review of the school's SEN policy will provide a good opportunity for the SEN team to review their approaches in light of changing pupil needs across the school and to identify how the resources of the team could be maximised. It is recommended that the following aspects of practice be considered at a whole-school level during this review: specific target setting and recording of progress; the use of baseline assessment data, the balance between in-class and withdrawal support; the extension of early intervention and team-teaching models and the provision of opportunities for comprehensive professional development for team members.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

On behalf of the school community of Carysfort National School, the Board of Management welcomes the Whole School Evaluation report, highlighting as it does the excellent standards of teaching, learning, leadership and management in Carysfort N.S. The Board notes with pride the inspectorate's findings in relation to the welcoming atmosphere, the excellent care and management of pupils, the supportive and inclusive culture of Carysfort National School and the wide variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities provided for the pupils. The Board also appreciates the acknowledgement of the excellent level of teamwork and collaboration among the staff notably in their commitment to the School Self-Evaluation process and the very good relationships within the school community as a whole.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The school recognises that a wide range of 'assessment **for** learning and **of** learning practices and strategies are in use at present. The Board is committed to providing training for the teaching staff in the area of assessment to further enhance current practices and to optimise pupil participation and learning.

The Learning Support/Resource team has begun reviewing the school SEN policy in light of continuing changes in pupil's needs across the school and are identifying how the resources of the team may be maximised to benefit each pupil. The team will further refine the individual education planning targets so that pupil progress can be tracked and teaching approaches modified as the pupil progresses through the school.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;