

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

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	SN An Spioraid Naiomh C
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Sillogue Road Ballymun Dublin 11
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	19209H

**Date of inspection: 11-03-2020**



---

An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **WHAT IS WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?**

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

## **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

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

1. The quality of pupils' learning
2. The quality of teaching
3. The quality of support for pupils' well-being
4. The quality of leadership and management
5. The quality of school self-evaluation

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 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.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school did not meet the requirements in relation to item 7 above at the time of the inspection. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements and is now fully compliant.

This evaluation was paused due to the school closures arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. While the majority of the inspection activities took place in March 2020, some inspection activity and the feedback meetings were not held until October 2020.

## **Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	11-03-2020
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team, and representatives of the board of management</li> <li>• Meeting with parent representatives</li> <li>• Meeting with teachers</li> <li>• Review of relevant documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of parent, pupil and teacher questionnaires</li> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li> <li>• Examination of pupils’ work</li> <li>• Interaction with pupils</li> <li>• Feedback meeting with principal, staff and board of management representatives</li> </ul>

### **SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Holy Spirit Girls National School is located in Ballymun and caters for girls from infants to sixth class. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and participates in Band 1 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity to Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. At the time of the evaluation, 309 pupils were enrolled. Staffing includes an administrative principal, fifteen mainstream teachers, seven teachers to support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) coordinator. The school has experienced significant turnover of staff, with approximately one third of the existing staff being new to their positions, including the recently appointed principal. Almost all members of the in-school management team are in acting-up positions. While the attendance rates for the majority of pupils are good, school leaders recognise the ongoing need for a sustained emphasis on supporting those pupils who miss more than twenty days.

### **SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is satisfactory; there remain deficits in the skill development and learning attainments of a significant cohort of pupils in the areas of literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with very good practice noted in a few instances; assessment information is not used sufficiently to inform teaching and learning.
- While there are many effective practices in place to support pupils with SEN, there remains a number of instances where the allocation of support is not aligned to the priority needs of pupils as advocated in the DES Special Education Circular 0013/2017.
- Support for pupils’ wellbeing is very good; a whole-school approach to promoting a sense of belonging for pupils and positive home-school partnerships are significant strengths.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is good; the principal has worked collaboratively with staff to address a number of organisational and curricular priorities.
- The quality of school self-evaluation is satisfactory overall; target setting in the context of DEIS planning does not yet sufficiently support incremental improvement in literacy and numeracy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A whole-school approach should be adopted to improving pupils' literacy skills, with particular attention to the provision of differentiated reading materials and the development of oral language skills on a cross-curricular basis.
- School leaders should develop a strategic plan to improve pupils' outcomes in Mathematics on a whole-school basis.
- Assessment data should be used more purposefully to differentiate provision for pupils in accordance with their varying abilities.
- School leaders should review the allocation of SET resources in accordance with Circular 0013/2017 to ensure provision of supplementary support is closely aligned to pupils' needs.
- The DEIS plan should be reviewed to ensure that improvement targets are sufficiently specific and supported by an action plan that contextualises implementation and ongoing monitoring.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory; while they demonstrate positive learning dispositions and commendably high levels of engagement in their learning activities, there remain deficits in the skill development and learning attainments of a significant cohort of pupils in the areas of literacy and numeracy.
- Although, a number of valuable initiatives have been established to provide pupils with enriching small-group learning experiences, many pupils in mainstream settings are working on tasks that are not aligned to their level of ability or need. While teachers are to be commended for adopting 'Talk Time' as an initiative to develop pupils' oral language skills, pupils require additional opportunities to use a range of language skills and subject-specific vocabulary across all curricular areas. Pupils would benefit from more regular opportunities to reflect on their learning experiences and attainments. Pupils report positively on their experiences of free writing and demonstrate good understanding of the narrative and recount genres in particular.
- Pupils were observed working collaboratively with other pupils in most settings during the evaluation. In particular, the quality of pupils' learning experiences during the play-based sessions informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is noteworthy. Pupils enjoy ample opportunity to engage in a range of artistic endeavours. The school choir demonstrates good levels of musicality in addition to a positive sense of pride and enjoyment.
- The analysis of the questionnaire data submitted by parents indicates that all parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child enjoys school.

### 2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The quality of teaching is good overall with very good practice noted in a few instances. Teachers create a positive learning atmosphere which is characterised by mutual respect and positive affirmation. They use a suitable range of approaches to motivate and manage pupils. Teachers prepare attractive learning environments and provide a broad range of curricular experiences for pupils. The extension of enquiry-based learning activities in Science is noted.
- Where individual teacher practice was noted to be very good, teachers used available assessment information and approaches to optimum effect; they differentiated supports and tasks to ensure that learning was sufficiently challenging but also achievable for pupils of varying abilities. These effective assessment and differentiation practices should now be extended on a whole-school basis. In particular, the school's DEIS literacy and numeracy targets should now be contextualised and used purposefully to inform teacher planning and to differentiate provision for pupils in accordance with their varying abilities.
- There are many effective practices in place to support pupils with SEN; the school has availed of support from the advisory services to embed the Continuum of Support. The documentation at school support and school support plus levels reflects suitable targets for pupils with SEN. Literacy Lift Off and Reading Recovery are well-established interventions that provide valuable supports for a number of pupils. The provision of in-class support programmes has been recently extended to include a greater number of classes. The redistribution of SET resources has resulted in a number of pupils with significant needs not receiving support in accordance with their degree of need. School leaders should review the allocation of SET resources in accordance with Circular 0013/2017 and the DES publication,

'Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with SEN in Mainstream Schools' to ensure supplementary support provided to pupils is in accordance with their prioritised needs.

- An example of effective collective teacher practice is the First Steps Writing Programme. Teachers have recently formed curriculum teams to review whole-school curriculum plans and to develop planning templates that support the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS' WELL-BEING**

- Support for pupils' wellbeing is very good overall with staff nurturing a positive, affirming learning environment for pupils with commendable emphasis on building a sense of belonging, resilience and self-belief. An effective whole-school approach to responding to priority pastoral care needs has been established through the mechanism of the care teams and regular activities that foster positive wellbeing.
- A proactive approach to supporting pupils' well-being through positive home-school partnerships is a significant strength of the school. The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator plays a crucial role in supporting parents and pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable or in need. She organises a range of classes and activities that supports parents to be actively involved in their children's education.
- Valuable links have been established with the local School Completion co-ordinator and other local agencies that provide support to pupils and their families.
- The Active Schools Programme contributes very effectively to the overall provision for pupils' well-being.
- In response to inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents either agree or strongly agree that there is a good atmosphere in the school. Data from pupils' questionnaires indicates that almost all pupils enjoy school and feel safe in class and in the playground.

### **4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The board of management demonstrates a clear understanding of the school's current priorities and a strong commitment to supporting school leaders and furthering school improvements.
- The recently appointed principal demonstrates very good leadership and management skills. She has worked collaboratively with the acting deputy principal, post-holders and staff to effectively address a number of identified priorities. While most members of the in-school management team are new to their roles, their actions are already resulting in positive changes. Sustaining an ongoing emphasis on monitoring the impact of improvement initiatives remains a priority going forward for all those involved in management and leadership roles.
- School leaders value parental involvement in school activities and seek to involve parents more in policy formation.
- The Parents' Association contributes in many valuable ways to the working of the school; the development and maintenance of the school garden along with the organisation of social events such as the Christmas Fete are key features of their activities.
- The school reported that it is open to providing placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, pupils and the teacher education institute.

## **5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION**

- The quality of school self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. A number of improvement initiatives have been successfully introduced including the recent use of digital technology as a mechanism to review and share whole-school and individual teacher planning. A renewed emphasis has been placed on monitoring the implementation of improvement initiatives. While the school has engaged in DEIS planning and review processes, the recommendations made in the DEIS evaluation of 2015 to adopt a more focused selection of improvement targets and monitoring of priority areas have yet to be implemented. The targets included in the current DEIS plan for literacy and numeracy are similar to those in the previous DEIS plan for 2015-2018 indicating a lack of progress in relation to a number of the improvement targets previously identified.
- The DEIS plan should be reviewed to ensure that improvement targets are sufficiently specific and that these supported by an action plan that contextualises the implementation at class level and delineates the various monitoring roles and requirements. Particular attention should be given to the monitoring of improvement initiatives in relation to pupil attendance, literacy and numeracy.

# **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 accepts the findings of the report. The Board of Management is happy that the report identifies support for pupil's wellbeing as a particular strength of the school and that teaching is of a good level. The Board of management wishes to thank the staff for their hard work and dedication to the students in Holy Spirit G.N.S.

### **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 Board of Management is happy to implement the recommendations made by the inspectorate

- The literacy programme in the school has been reviewed and updated. We are in the process of implementing a new whole school approach to literacy.
- We are currently reviewing the Mathematics programme and we have plans to implement Maths Recovery and in-class support on a whole-school basis.
- We have reviewed our student data and modified how we allocate differentiated SEN support for children to ensure that the support is closely aligned to the children's needs.
- We are in the process of reviewing the school D.E.I.S. plan with a view to ensuring that improvement targets are specific and supported by action, monitoring and evaluation.

## 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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;