

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	St Thomas' SNS
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24.
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	197650

Date of Evaluation: 15-05-2017



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 educational provision 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 one other subject.

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	15-05-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with principal• Meeting with the in-school management team• Meeting with representative teachers from the special educational needs team• Meeting with the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interviews	<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

Saint Thomas' Senior National School is a co-educational primary school in Tallaght, Dublin 24, and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It receives additional grants through its participation in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. The attendance levels of the 433 pupils are generally very good. A wide range of strategies supports good attendance with a particular focus on pupils who miss more than twenty days. Teaching and learning were evaluated in 11 mainstream settings and 10 support settings, including two special classes for pupils with specific learning difficulties, one special class for pupils with mild general learning difficulties, and one setting for pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall management is very effective with the dedicated principal providing outstanding leadership to the school community.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The quality of support and care for pupils' wellbeing is a very significant strength of the school.
- While a wide range of very effective supports is in place for pupils with special educational needs, aspects of planning show scope for development.
- Overall pupils' competence and confidence in oral language need further development.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge sásúil.
The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should review its approaches to provision for Gaeilge and English in order to provide guidance on progressing pupils' oral language development.
- Teachers in support settings should ensure that short-term planning is clearly linked to targets in support plans, and that those targets are specific, measurable, attainable and realistic, and that reviewed support plans clearly document progression.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Leadership and management in this school are of a very high standard. The board of management meets regularly and members are very aware of the context of the school. They have high expectations for pupils and regularly appraise their learning achievements including, but not limited to, a review of standardised test results. The board oversees the maintenance of a safe and attractive learning environment, one in which the pupils' diverse learning needs are catered for respectfully.
- The dedicated principal provides outstanding leadership to the school community. She promotes a culture of respect and shared accountability which results in a very positive school climate. The work of the deputy principal is highly commendable, and together with the in-school management team, they support the principal very effectively in leading school improvement.
- The management of resources is very good. Resources are comprehensive, highly organised, and accessible, and teachers utilise them effectively to enhance pupils' learning experiences. Classroom environments evidence appropriate displays of pupils' work. School staff are managed very effectively. Special needs assistants (SNAs) capably support pupils. The school library is attractive and is managed by pupils and teachers.
- The management of communications and relations with the community is a significant strength of the school. Constructive relationships among school partners are maintained through effective communications using a range of media. Significant efforts are made to ensure a high level of pupil participation in the operation of the school. The parents' association gives very good support to the school. In the questionnaires distributed prior to the evaluation, all parents agreed that they feel welcome in the school.
- The management of pupils is very good. Teachers succeed in creating inclusive and pupil-centred learning environments which are based on mutual respect. During the evaluation, pupils presented as eager learners. Whole-school approaches to positive pupil management are very successfully implemented.
- 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

- The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation is good overall. A wide range of administrative policies effectively guides the smooth operation of the school. Whole-school curriculum plans are provided for each subject area evaluated and the quality of these is good overall. It is recommended that the whole-school plans for Gaeilge and English be reviewed in order to provide guidance on progressing pupils' oral language development.

- Teachers' classroom planning is good overall. Long-term plans give good direction to short-term planning.
- The school reported that it is not currently engaged in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action. However, evidence available from the school's DEIS action-planning processes, along with school self-evaluation work conducted prior to industrial action, shows that the school has engaged in the SSE process. Agreed actions are impacting positively on teaching and learning.

3. QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The quality of learning is good overall, while the quality of teaching, in particular, is very good. Teachers' own enthusiasm for learning succeeds in creating a learning environment where pupils are motivated to extend and enjoy their learning. It is noteworthy how the pupils make meaningful and authentic connections between learning in different subjects. The school should now place a consistent and systematic focus on developing pupils' confidence and competence in oral language. The successful approaches that the school has implemented with regard to planning for and teaching reading comprehension should be extended to ensure systematic and progressive development of pupils' oral language competencies.
- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc, na foghlama agus ghnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge sásúil. Tá réimse d'abairtí agus foclóra foghlamtha ag na daltaí. Mar sin féin, is léir go bhfuil easpa muiníne acu agus iad ag labhairt. Cé go bhfuil daltaí i roinnt suímh in ann dánta, rannta agus amhráin a rá, ba chóir go mbeadh béim níos treise ar an gcuid seo den chleachtas i ngach rang. Ní mór do na hoidí sách ama a chaitheamh ar theanga nua a mhúineadh chun tacaíocht níos fearr a thabhairt do chleachtadh teanga na ndaltaí san obair bheirte agus sa ghrúpobair. Ina theannta sin, moltar go gcláródh gach oide torthaí foghlama teanga faoi leith ina bpleanáil gearrthéarmach go seasta d'fhonn tacaíocht a thabhairt don dul chun cinn agus comhdhlúthú na foghlama. Is inmholta go dtéann na daltaí i ngleic le réimse leathan de scríbhneoireacht fheidhmiúil agus chruthaitheach agus tá cáilíocht shásúil ag baint leis an obair seo.

The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish is satisfactory. Pupils have learned a range of sentences and vocabulary. However, they lack confidence in speaking. While pupils in a number of settings can recite some poems, rhymes and songs, there should be a stronger emphasis on this aspect of practice in all classes. Teachers should spend sufficient time teaching new language in order to better support the pupils' practice of this language during group and pair work. Furthermore, it is advised that all teachers consistently include specific language learning outcomes in their short-term planning to support progression and consolidation of learning. Commendably, pupils engage in a wide range of functional and creative writing and the quality of this work is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good overall. Pupils are encouraged to participate orally during lessons. However, there is scope to improve their competence and confidence in oral language. Pupils are enabled to articulate their learning confidently as a result of highly effective and consistent teaching of reading comprehension

strategies. Therefore, it is advised that this approach to the planning and teaching of specific reading skills be extended in order to ensure systematic and progressive development of pupils' overall oral language competencies. Pupils are reading well at their instructional level. Further assessment is needed to inform the provision of material for weaker readers. The school has implemented a very good plan for teaching creative writing. Teachers should ensure that pupils' writing develops incrementally as they progress from class to class.

- The standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Clear teaching of concepts with high levels of pupil engagement were the hallmarks of most lessons observed. Highly effective oral mathematics was a feature in a number of lessons. This aspect of practice should be part of all lessons in Mathematics. Teachers are advised to carry out a deeper analysis of assessment information regarding pupils' mathematical achievements and to systematically focus their teaching on areas of weakness identified.
- Teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Geography is very good. Teachers' classroom planning encompasses very effective coverage of the curriculum guiding a broad and balanced experience for pupils, including a sufficient emphasis on skills development. The exemplary school garden and the Green Schools initiative are used to enhance learning experiences. The school is highly commended for its selection of a range of contrasting environments for pupils to study. Teaching in nearly all lessons was of a very high quality with a range of differentiated and engaging tasks provided. The school is advised to adopt a consistent approach to practical investigations of weather and climate and their effects on the local environment.
- A wide range of assessment strategies is used effectively to track pupils' learning. Standardised test results are carefully monitored. A more fine-grained analysis of assessment data is advised to systematically address the range of learning needs. In addition, teachers should ensure that where assessment-of-learning checklists are used to document progress, they are designed to clearly record the pupils' performance with regard to the achievement of specific learning objectives.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- Support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is of a high quality overall. Teaching in all SEN settings is underpinned by very positive relationships with high levels of pupil engagement during lessons. Recommendations for individual pupils, stemming from external professional reports, form the basis of planning. Teachers should ensure that all targets in support plans, which are derived from the pupils' priority learning needs, are specific and measurable so that progress can be easily recorded. Furthermore, short-term planning in all settings should provide for the recording of the achievement of these targets.
- Short-term planning for pupils in all settings should be prepared weekly in order to effectively support provision for differentiated learning outcomes.

- Effective provision is made for small groups and individuals who exhibit persistent and unpredictable behavioural difficulties in the classroom in order to support their ongoing inclusion and participation.
- The quality of support and care for pupils' wellbeing is a very significant strength of the school. Through the work of the school's care team, concerns regarding individual pupils' overall wellbeing are identified and addressed. The work of the Home School Community Liaison teacher is particularly effective in supporting pupils and their families. A wide range of enriching co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils through the dedication of the staff.

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 St Thomas' Senior National School welcomes this very positive Whole School Evaluation report which acknowledges and affirms the dedication and commitment of the School Staff, the Board of Management, In School Management Team, Special Education Team and Parents.

The Board welcomes the findings with regard to the very high standard of leadership and management and the very high quality of teaching that exist in the school.

The Board is particularly pleased that the culture of respect in the school, the very positive school climate, the very high quality of pupil management and the support and care for pupils' wellbeing as being a very significant strength of the school has been recognised and acknowledged in the report.

The Board would like to congratulate the pupils and commend the commitment and professionalism of the teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff.

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 welcomes and values the advice and recommendations made and have prioritised these with immediate effect through the following actions.

School support has been requested from PDST for this school year to assist the staff in reviewing the approaches to the provision of Gaeilge and English in order to provide guidance on progressing pupils' oral language development. Working groups have been established to develop and implement the recommendations including the review and updating of the School Plans with reference to oral language.

Strategies to ensure the progression of pupils' oral language development will be developed and implemented by the staff.

CPD in Target Writing will be provided by NEPS this term for teachers working in support setting. This will ensure that short term planning is clearly linked to SMART targets in the pupil's support plans.

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 very good 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. 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;