

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | St Attracta's Junior N S |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Meadowbrook Dundrum Dublin 16 |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 19537B |

Date of inspection: 24-11-2017



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 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 – Management, Leadership and Learning

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| Dates of inspection | 24-11-2017 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with principal and in-school leadership team• Meeting with representatives of the board of management• Meeting with parent representatives• Meeting with teachers• Review of relevant documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Attracta's National School is a co-educational, Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. It caters for pupils from junior infants to second class.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- An excellent culture of collaboration and creativity in teaching, learning and assessment and a continuous focus on improvement exists throughout the school.
- The quality of leadership at all levels is of a very high standard.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning achievements is very good; there is scope for additional opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology (ICT).
- Support for pupils' well-being is excellent.
- While the overall quality of teaching is very good, whole school approaches to the teaching of writing genres would benefit from further development.
- Although the school is not currently engaging in the School Self-evaluation process due to National industrial action, previous improvement plans are having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To enhance pupils' learning experiences, ICT should be further embedded as an integral part of learning.
- To further develop pupils' writing skills, a deeper whole-school focus on specific structures and language appropriate to particular genres should be devised.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils learning achievements is very good. Learning environments celebrate pupils' work and feature a variety of interesting displays and investigation tables. Pupils engage enthusiastically and are motivated to learn. They have a very good repertoire of songs and poems and enjoy communicating in both English and Irish. They demonstrate very high levels of participation in challenging and meaningful learning activities that focus on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes across all subjects.
- Pupils work well independently and are provided with opportunities to work in groups and to discuss their learning with each other. They display understanding of learning tasks, they ask questions and offer solutions. While pupils are afforded some opportunities to use ICT, this should be further embedded school-wide and as an integral part of learning.
- Noteworthy, initiatives including *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, *Active Schools week*, *engineering and science workshops*, and the school's *arts education programme* enhance pupils' learning experiences.
- Achievements in English and Mathematics are very good. Pupils display understanding of concepts across all strands of the Mathematics curriculum and the ability to link their learning to real life situations. A wide variety of reading material is available in all classrooms and the library. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading and read confidently at their instructional level. The pupils' ability to talk about their learning and to self-assess the quality of their own work is exemplary.

2. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers are very effective communicators and provide stimulating print-rich and very well resourced learning environments. Teachers consistently share their learning intentions with the pupils, check for understanding and deliver well-structured lessons using a variety of teaching methodologies. Content, questions, activities and resources are meaningfully differentiated to cater for the varying needs and abilities of pupils.
- Teachers place a significant emphasis on developing pupils' language in all subjects. A very successful, systematic whole-school approach to the teaching of reading is well embedded. Teachers are fostering an enthusiasm for writing across the curriculum with a very good focus on penmanship, motivating pupils, on writing for a variety of purposes and self-assessment of writing. A deeper whole-school focus on genre writing and the specific structures and language appropriate to particular genres would further benefit pupils' writing.
- There is a balanced and flexible approach to supporting pupils including withdrawal of pupils and in-class support. Suitable strategies and programmes are put in place to enable pupils to cope with particular difficulties they are encountering. Teaching approaches are adjusted to accommodate differences in pupils' learning styles. The impact of the support provided on pupils' progress is monitored and reviewed regularly. Team teaching is very well structured, with clear roles for all teachers and it targets pupils' assessed learning needs.
- A strong culture of planning and reflecting on practice underpins the work of the teachers. Whole-school curriculum planning is having a very positive impact on classroom practice. Subject plans provide very good guidance to teachers with detailed programmes of work and

resources available for all classes. Teachers' long term and short-term plans include clear learning outcomes, the development of subject specific skills and assessment for learning strategies.

- Very high quality assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning. A broad range of assessment strategies are agreed and consistently implemented. Teachers use assessment data to inform and improve their practice. Pupils' self-assessment practices are very well developed and pupils can talk about their learning with confidence and understanding.

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

- Support for pupils' well-being is excellent. The highly committed and dedicated staff contribute to promoting a very positive atmosphere throughout the school. A strong emphasis on the holistic development of each child and inclusion of all pupils is reflected in practice and policy. A comprehensive Social, Personal and Health Education Programme with home-school links supports pupils' well-being.
- The focus on actively involving pupils in their learning and encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their learning is exemplary practice. A significant strength is the cross curricular integration of Physical Education, with pupils physically active in most lessons.
- Very good emphasis is placed on environmental awareness and care and this is reflected in the school's successful involvement in the *Green Schools Programme*, school garden activities and classroom lessons.
- 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*.

4. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management at all levels is of a very high standard. The board of management manages the school efficiently and competently. They are actively involved in organisational and curriculum planning. The board contributes significantly to staff morale and well-being by promoting a positive culture, providing high quality resources and by facilitating professional development for all staff. Responses to questionnaires indicate that all teachers agree that the school is well run and that new teachers are well supported.
- The principal demonstrates a deep commitment to high standards and places a strong emphasis on establishing a learning community. He displays very effective organisational and curriculum leadership skills. The dedicated in-school management team share a sense of common purpose and work very well together to achieve continuous school improvement. They carry out their wide-ranging duties conscientiously and thoroughly.
- A shared parent-teacher association provides very good support to both the junior and senior schools. Effective communication between home and school is established. Responses to questionnaires indicate that all parents agree that they are happy with the school

5. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- Although the school are not currently engaging in the School Self-evaluation process due to National industrial action, previous improvement plans particularly in English, Mathematics and assessment are having a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- The school's capacity to develop further is very good. An excellent culture of collaboration and creativity in teaching, learning and assessment and a continuous focus on improvement exists throughout the school.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the report's findings which identify the:

- Excellent culture of collaboration and creativity in teaching, learning and assessment, coupled with a continuous focus on improvement that exists throughout the school.
- Very good quality of meaningful learning experiences for pupils across all curricular areas.
- Very good quality of teaching, underpinned by a strong culture of planning and reflection among teachers.
- Excellence in support for pupil's well-being, reinforced by the work of a highly committed and dedicated staff who promote a very positive atmosphere in the school.
- Very high quality of leadership and management at all levels.
- Effective home-school communications, and satisfaction amongst parents with the school.

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 notes the acknowledgement that teachers are fostering an enthusiasm for writing across the curriculum, and that there is a very good focus placed on penmanship, pupil's motivation to write, pupils' abilities to write for a variety of purposes and self-assessment of writing. As part of our ongoing commitment to innovation and improvement we now look forward to enhancing this work through the introduction of a whole-school focus on genre writing(as recommended), in the context of the next phase of the School Self Evaluation process.

Likewise it is intended that the continued use of ICT as an integral part of learning will be further embedded in the context of the School's Digital Strategy 2018-2020.

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 |
|---------------------|--|---|
| 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; |