

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School Name	St Francis Xavier Junior National School
Seoladh na scoile/ School Address	Roselawn Road Castleknock Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	19435Q

Date of inspection: 29-01-2020



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHAT IS 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 leadership and management, school planning and self-evaluation, and support for pupils, the inspectors typically examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and one other subject.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. The quality of leadership and management
2. The quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
3. The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
4. The 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.

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, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Whole-School Evaluation

Date of inspection	29-01-2020
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with principal • Meeting with in-school management team • Meeting with special education team • Meeting with board of management • Meeting with parent representatives • Review of relevant documents	• Analysis of parent and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to in-school management team, teachers, and board and parent representatives

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Francis Xavier Junior National School is an urban, co-educational junior primary school operating under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The attendance patterns of the 409 pupils enrolled are very good overall. The school has an administrative principal, sixteen mainstream class teachers and eight special education teachers including a teacher of a special class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of leadership and management is very good; the principal and the in-school management (ISM) team lead teaching and learning in a highly commendable manner, and the board of management demonstrates strong commitment to the development of the school.
- School planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) are of good quality with many whole-school improvement initiatives impacting very positively on teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good with some exemplary practice observed; teachers utilise a broad range of teaching approaches successfully to elicit and maintain high levels of pupil engagement.
- Pupils' achievements in Irish, English, Mathematics and Social, Personal Health Education (SPHE) are very good overall; during a small number of lessons observed, more-able pupils were not challenged sufficiently in their learning.
- The overall quality of assessment is good; teachers' summative practices are embedded across the curriculum, though they are not balanced sufficiently by methods of formative assessment.
- The overall quality of support is very good; pupils with special educational needs (SEN) experience high quality learning experiences that promotes their inclusion and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should extend their formative assessment of pupils' mastery of concepts and skills across the curriculum, and make greater provision for pupil self-assessment.
- The learning activities that teachers design and provide for pupils should be further differentiated to ensure they are sufficiently challenging for more-able pupils.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is very good. The board displays a strong sense of dedication to the development of the school, the creation of an inclusive culture and the promotion of teachers' professional development. Board members have a broad skill base; they are alert and responsive to the changing needs of the school. The board maintains the building and grounds to a very high standard. It provides parents with an annual report on the work of the school and its achievements.
- The principal is highly effective in her instructional leadership. She affords a very high priority to the well-being of pupils and staff. The principal has been successful in facilitating the development of a very effective model of distributed leadership in the school. The ISM team consists of a deputy principal and four assistant principals who undertake a broad range of duties very diligently, managing change processes in a highly committed and professional manner. The principal and ISM team work collaboratively to ensure that implemented actions lead to identifiable improvements in teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences.
- Home-school communication is very good. The board and principal work purposefully with the parents' association to help it fulfil its partnership and advisory role. Meaningful procedures are in place that enable open dialogue with parents, including their involvement in the formulation of relevant policies. In response, the parents' association provides very good support to the work of the school. The school's participation in Action Team Partnership assists parents to become more involved in their child's learning in literacy and numeracy with a view to providing enhanced learning outcomes for pupils. Parents are encouraged to participate in workshops with regard to aspects of pupils' learning and well-being. They are also invited into classrooms to view their child's learning achievements on a termly basis.
- During the evaluation, very effective management of pupils was observed. The pupils are polite and courteous, and they are welcoming of visitors. They demonstrate very positive dispositions towards school life and they work cooperatively with teachers and staff. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, almost all parents and teachers agreed that they were very satisfied with management, discipline and pupil welfare in the school.
- Procedures to support the mentoring and induction of teachers are well established. The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. This can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, pupils and the teacher education institution.

2. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

- The overall quality of school planning and SSE is good. The effectiveness of organisational planning is evident in the highly efficient day-to-day running of the school. Whole-school curriculum planning is of good quality, with teachers collaborating very effectively to provide varied and engaging learning experiences for pupils. Recently reviewed whole-school plans provide comprehensive information to support teachers' implementation of the curriculum. In a small number of curriculum plans, there is need to include further delineation of learning content and assessment practices to guide and support teachers' classroom practice.

- The quality of SSE is very good. School leaders are successful in nurturing a culture of improvement and innovation in teaching and learning. There is very meaningful consultation, involvement and communication throughout the process. Many whole-school improvement initiatives have been established successfully; they are impacting very positively on the pupils' learning experiences. There is need to develop measurable targets and associated actions in the school improvement plan so that the impact and effectiveness of the SSE process on pupils' learning outcomes can be monitored and evaluated.
- Teachers' professional collaborative discussions and their willingness to share their skills and expertise adds richness to their general preparedness for lessons. Teachers' individual short-term curriculum planning should include more specific differentiation of objectives and strategies to support them in catering for the pupils' varying abilities. In reviewing monthly progress reports, it is advised that teachers consider collaboratively and individually how this record of provision fully reflects teaching and learning in their individual classes.

3. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good overall. All teachers create vibrant and stimulating learning environments and they utilise a broad range of teaching approaches to elicit and maintain high levels of pupil engagement. They make judicious and effective use of digital technologies to support their teaching. Their collective practice places strong emphasis on the development of pupils' vocabulary and the provision of appropriately playful learning experiences. Overall, there is very good evidence of progression and development in the pupils' learning outcomes. Where exemplary practice was observed, teachers made highly effective use of incidental learning opportunities and they provided suitably differentiated learning experiences to cater for pupils' varying abilities. During a small number of lessons, more-able pupils were not challenged sufficiently in their learning. The learning activities that teachers design and provide for pupils should be further differentiated to ensure they are sufficiently challenging for more-able pupils. It is advised that teachers extend their questioning techniques to develop pupils' thinking further.
- During a meeting with the parents' association, representatives indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning. In the Inspectorate questionnaires, all parents agreed that teaching was good in the school and that their child enjoys school.
- Teaching and learning in English are of very good quality. Teachers integrate oral, reading and writing activities very effectively. Their collective focus on oral language is supporting pupils successfully to acquire a broader repertoire of vocabulary. The pupils' phonological skills are very well developed. Pupils recite a wide repertoire of rhymes and jingles with meaningful expression. They write competently in a broad range of genres. In almost all settings, a review of copybook work demonstrates very good progression in the pupils' writing skills. Teachers should provide pupils with additional formative feedback to support them in editing their work and in progressing the quality of their writing. All pupils have access to a wide range of reading experiences. Teachers have recently introduced graded reading material in a number of classrooms to very good effect. Plans are in place to extend this practice across the school.

- Tá cáilíocht an teagaisc agus na foghlama sa Ghaeilge an-mhaith ar an iomlán. Forbraítear scileanna éisteachta na ndaltaí go cumasach. Cuirtear béim chuí ar rannta agus ar amhráin tríd an scoil. Úsáideann na múinteoirí an Ghaeilge go héifeachtach mar straitéis bainistíochta ranga agus múineann siad ceachteanna trí mheán na Gaeilge amháin. Léiríonn na daltaí bród as a gcuid cumais sa Ghaeilge. Tá foclóir an-leathan foghlamtha ag na daltaí agus tugann na múinteoirí go léir deiseanna oiriúnacha dóibh é a chleachtadh trí úsáid a bhaint as cluichí, as grúpobair agus as obair bheirte. Nuair a bhí an cleachtas an-éifeachtúil, thug na múinteoirí neart deiseanna do na daltaí ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt agus a gcuid scileanna cumarsáide a chleachtadh i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla. Ba chóir an cleachtas seo a leathnú chuig gach seomra ranga. Tá luathscileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí forbartha go hoiriúnach. *The quality of teaching and learning in Irish is very good overall. Pupils' listening skills are developed competently. Suitable emphasis is placed on rhymes and songs throughout the school. Teachers use Irish effectively as a classroom management strategy and they teach lessons entirely through Irish. The pupils display a sense of pride in their ability to use Irish. The pupils have learned a wide vocabulary and all teachers provide them with suitable opportunities to practise it through the use of games, group work and pair work. Where practice was highly effective, the teachers provided pupils with ample opportunities to ask and answer questions, and to practise their communication skills in a variety of contexts. This practice should be extended to all classrooms. Pupils' early reading and writing skills are developed very suitably.*
- Teaching, learning and pupil attainment in Mathematics are very good. The whole-school emphasis on the development of pupils' problem-solving abilities and on identifying Mathematics in the environment is impacting positively on pupils' learning outcomes. Classroom environments promote Mathematics and celebrate pupils' achievements. The pupils enjoy frequent opportunities to be active in their learning and to work collaboratively with their peers. They have access to a broad range of mathematical resources and concrete materials to support them in their learning. Most pupils use appropriate mathematical language and they ably justify and explain their answers and methods. In a small number of instances, pupils with higher mathematical ability were not sufficiently challenged during lessons. Teachers should provide these pupils with more challenging learning activities on a consistent basis to further enhance their capacity to reason mathematically.
- The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE is very good. The provision is central to the school's ethos and it permeates the everyday life of the school. Teachers meaningfully integrate aspects of SPHE within other subject areas. They create secure learning environments where pupils experience a sense of belonging. Teachers' use of individualised short stories and restorative practices to promote the development of the pupils' social skills is to be commended. Teachers actively seek the views and opinions of pupils through frequent use of talk and discussion, role-play and circle-time. Teachers should place additional emphasis on the use of higher-order questioning and open-ended tasks to develop the pupils' ability to reflect critically and to assist them in articulate their learning. Overall, the pupils are developing very good capacity to listen to one another, to appreciate different points of view and to respect the diversity that exists in society.
- The quality of assessment is good. Teachers engage in the consistent monitoring of pupils' copybook work and they provide very affirming commentary in response to the pupils' writing. Highly effective use of assessment-for-learning strategies, including pupil self-assessment, was noted in a small number of instances. This very good practice should be shared across the school to assist pupils in taking responsibility for improving their work.

While teachers' use of summative assessment practices are embedded across the curriculum, they are not sufficiently balanced by methods of formative assessment. Teachers should extend their formative assessment of pupils' mastery of concepts and skills across the curriculum, and make greater provision for pupil self-assessment.

4. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- The quality of support for pupils is very good overall. Teachers engage in continuous professional development to inform their individual and collective purpose. *The Continuum of Support* is implemented cohesively in the school. A range of modes of support, including in-class interventions and small-group withdrawal, is deployed flexibly in response to the pupils' prioritised learning needs.
- There is close collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers to support pupils with SEN. Teachers promote meaningful consultation with all relevant stakeholders when devising pupil support plans. Overall, target-setting in support plans is specific and measurable and teachers monitor pupils' progression in learning carefully. The effectiveness and impact of supports is evaluated by teachers on a continuous basis.
- Provision for pupils with ASD is aligned appropriately to the pupils' social, emotional and academic needs. The facilitation of pupils with ASD in mainstream classes is very effective. Observed interactions between teachers and pupils with ASD in mainstream and special education settings were very skilful.
- The quality of care for pupils' well-being is very good. The pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in a wide range of co-curricular activities, and their achievements in various aspects of their learning are celebrated. The pupils discuss their participation in anti-bullying programmes and their involvement in the Green Schools' and Active Schools' committees with high levels of enthusiasm. The facilitation of the development of pupils' leadership capacities and their engagement in relevant decision-making is praiseworthy.

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 of 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. 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;

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 Saint Francis Xavier Junior National School thanks the Department of Education and Skills for the opportunity to respond to this report.

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 has taken careful note of the findings and of the recommendations therein. We note that the report clearly affirms the great work being carried out by the school team of teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff led capably by the principal and her management team. The two recommendations have been noted and we have already had a preliminary discussion about how these can be implemented in the coming school years, building on existing school improvement programmes currently in place. Specifically, a review of provision for more-able students is under way. Furthermore, the whole-school approach to formative assessment is to be included as a school improvement item for the school year 2020-2021, particularly to develop pupil self-assessment practices, drawing on the advice of the report. The board of management will continue to work with the whole-school community – staff, students and parents – to ensure that the current high standards are maintained.