An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Coláiste Muire
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bishop's St Cobh Co Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	62180E

Date of Evaluation: 09-02-2017

AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT
OIDEACHAIS | OF EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

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

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

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.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	07-02-2017 to 09-02-2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus-group interview	• Meeting with parents • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Coláiste Muire is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (PBST). There are 611 students currently enrolled in the school. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school is celebrating its fortieth anniversary since the founding amalgamation of the Mercy Convent and Presentation Brothers schools.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The board of management provides very effective management and strategic leadership for the school.
- The principal and deputy principal provide very effective leadership of the school and of student learning.
- The board and school management have put a number of communication structures in place; there is now a need to consider the effectiveness of these structures in light of information from the evaluation surveys
- The guidance counsellors have developed a guidance plan which provides a structure for their work within the school, and which could be further developed to include other aspects of whole-school support that exist.
- The school has been an early adopter of using information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and are experienced at being innovators in the area, which could now focus on how ICT could support student learning.
- The school has not fully complied with implementing the English specification at junior cycle. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action
- The school self-evaluation process continues to inform progress in the school and has now become an embedded element in the school's development culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board should engage in a communications' study which would identify, evaluate and further develop communication flows between the school and its stakeholders.
- The guidance counselling plan should form the basis of a broader whole-school guidance plan which would set out the components of the student support system which operates in the school.

- The experience already built up through the *teaching hub* project should allow for the development of a school-wide learning platform which would support communication, collaboration and student learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management:

The board of management provides very effective management and strategic leadership for the school. The current board is in place since October 2016 and is properly constituted. Board members bring significant experience, expertise and commitment to their role and there have been mutually strong links created between the board and the trustee. The board meets regularly, with well-structured agendas followed, and there are good reporting mechanisms to stakeholders in place. The board is aware of its statutory obligations and responsibilities, and child protection and anti- bullying procedures have been developed. A policy development and review structure is in place, which includes all stakeholders at appropriate points in the process. All mandatory policies have been adopted and the board views school self-evaluation as a driver towards progress in the school. The board has identified a number of strategic priorities which include: attainment; curriculum review; an eLearning plan; a post-holders review; assessment; inclusivity; and continuing professional development (CPD) for staff in the area of collaborative learning. The parent council is active and committed to the future development of the school. It has regular consultations with senior management and it sees itself as having a mainly supportive role for the school by helping to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students.

The board and school management have put a number of communication structures in place, such as a texting service, website, TY newsletter and a social media presence. However, despite these structures, data from the parent and student surveys suggests that communication and feedback flows to and from the various stakeholders should be reviewed. The board should engage in a communications' study which would identify, evaluate and further develop communication flows between the school and its stakeholders.

The board has a number of sub-committees in place in areas such as finance, policies and maintenance. The board could consider setting up a representative sub-committee for developing, interpreting, mediating and enacting policy on curricular issues. This would be particularly important in the context of current curricular change in the junior cycle and new curricular options at senior cycle level.

The principal and deputy principal provide very effective leadership of the school and of student learning. They work well together as a highly effective team, and their roles and areas of responsibility are clearly defined, shared and are complementary. Both principal and deputy principal display a deep commitment and support to students, staff and to the wider school community. They lead learning in their school by continuously striving for excellence in all areas of student experience and achievement by setting high expectations for students, staff and for themselves. They provide a flexible and

supportive school environment within which quality learning can take place. Both the principal and deputy principal are very visible throughout the school and they are outward looking in terms of their vision for the future of the school.

Effective middle management structures are in place and involve year heads, class teachers and subject teachers. A variety of management roles is distributed among staff members and staff teams, for example a care team, a literacy team, a numeracy team and an attainment team. A strong culture of professional development, communication, collegiality and collaboration exists in the school and is underpinned by a strong subject department structure. The role of year head has been strengthened in recent years and year heads have received targeted training for their role, organised by their management body. Their main responsibilities include areas such as student behaviour and pastoral care. Staff show a commendable commitment to after-school and extra-curricular activities and staff are also afforded opportunities to lead projects and initiatives, within a school culture of professional development and collaboration. An innovative Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) club is organised for students as a lunch-time and after-school activity, while teachers and management have formed an information and communication technology (ICT) group which focuses on the development of the school's *teaching hub*. Moving forward, the school should investigate the idea of establishing an advisory board of studies which could act as a teaching and learning group at staff level. This group could consolidate the skills, knowledge and experience which already exist among staff and develop a community of practice around pedagogy and innovation for student learning.

Almost all parents, students and teachers surveyed agreed that there was a good atmosphere in the school. A similar proportion of parents agreed that the school was well run, and that their child enjoyed school. Almost all students agreed that they were proud to be in this school.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for students, and this includes very successful and well-organised TY and LCVP programmes. Students in a focus group emphasised the importance of the TY programme as being a major strength of the school. The school provides a positive, caring and inclusive learning atmosphere for students and this is reflected in the survey results where almost all students and parents agreed that students felt safe and cared for in this school. Attendance and retention rates are monitored appropriately and whole-school activities, such as the school musical, are always encouraged. Classes are generally organised in mixed-ability bands. First-year students sample a range of modern foreign languages throughout the year. Student progress is monitored effectively with target grades discussed and agreed with senior cycle students. The student journal contains templates where students can track their own progress in tests and examinations against their own agreed targets. Provision for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is in accordance with Department of Education and Skills guidelines. Strategies are in place which focus on the transition of first-year students from primary to post-primary settings. Potential exists in the weekly school timetable for including a second physical education (PE) lesson in the senior cycle.

Student leadership is effectively and actively promoted in the school through the student council. The council has regular meetings and is consulted on policy development and review. There is a high level of community involvement by students from the school. A Meitheal team, comprised of senior

students, has a mentoring role with first-year students in the school, while a student-led social justice group is also active in the school.

Student support structures are in place and these are underpinned by a care team which has a key role in this area. The special educational needs (SEN) department has developed effective structures through which they can communicate with, advise and inform staff across all subject departments. An *ABC* anti-bullying initiative, a mental health week, a *Darkness into Light* project and after-school supervised study are examples of how the school supports students outside their regular, curricular-based activities. There are two guidance counsellors who share the guidance function, a SEN co-ordinator, a number of special needs assistants (SNA) and a learning support team, all of whom are involved in the provision of student care and support. Key student support teams meet on a regular basis; senior management is always represented at these meetings.

The student support system in a school should encompass a range of supports that cater for the learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs of students. Ideally, a student support team co-ordinates the support available. The school should broaden the current care team representation and roles into a student support team as envisaged in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) guidelines (2014). This team could include the principal or deputy principal, guidance counsellor, SEN co-ordinator, a year-head representative, a class-teacher representative, SPHE co-ordinator, a learning-support representative and SNA representation. Currently, the guidance counsellors have developed a guidance plan which provides a structure for their work within the school. This plan should form the basis of a broader whole-school guidance plan which would set out the components of the student support system that operates in the school and would include the SPHE curriculum, the behaviour management system, the role of year heads, the role of class teachers and learning support strategies.

A significant number of teaching hours have been allocated to support the needs of students with special educational needs and this reflects the inclusive character of the school. Some very good planning and organisational structures underpin established practices in the department and the board has recently ratified a whole-school inclusion and SEN policy. Very good inclusive practice was observed in some lessons which included personalised instruction and positive individual support of students, during purposeful independent and collaborative tasks. However, there are thirty-three teachers involved in giving support. A better balance in favour of SEN provision should be timetabled for a core team of SEN teachers, particularly as the school is committed to building capacity in special education.

1.3. Management of facilities

Accommodation and facilities are maintained to a high standard and the school has developed ambitious expansion plans for the future. Specialist rooms are available in many subject areas and sports facilities are very good. A recent staffroom upgrade has facilitated more collaboration possibilities for staff and extra work stations have been provided. A high level of awareness and experience exists around health and safety issues in the school; however, it is necessary to review roles and responsibilities in this area in accordance with Health and Safety Authority guidelines. ICT resources are available for teaching and learning and they are used appropriately in lessons. The school has developed a digital *teaching hub* platform in recent years which has been used by teachers to collaborate and share materials, especially within subject departments, while some teachers are using the *hub* to share resources with students. All classrooms are equipped with a computer and a data projector, and many rooms have visualisers available. The school has been an early adopter of using ICT as a teaching tool and are experienced at being innovators in the area. An ICT group has

been formed to look at future developments in ICT at the school. The school should now create a vision for ICT development, in both teaching and learning, and create an ICT plan which will focus on supporting learners and learning. The experience already built up, through the *teaching hub* project, should allow for the development of a school-wide learning platform, encompassing both teaching and learning, which would support communication, collaboration and student learning. The school should also consolidate the ICT resources and technologies which it has already created and could also explore the possible use of mobile and tablet technologies. CPD in this area should focus on what adds value to student learning.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of learning and teaching ranged from good to very good, with some examples of excellent practice observed. Lessons were universally well-prepared and learning intentions were clear, and were most effective when they helped to consolidate student learning at the end of a lesson. Links to previous learning were used effectively and a wide range of questioning strategies was observed. Best practice was apparent where students had opportunities to work together in structured groups and where student learning was task-based. The school could look at the lay-out of classrooms and how they might be re-arranged to support and encourage a collaborative learning focus. Differentiation and personalisation of learning was observed on occasion and this practice is supported by recent CPD interventions in the school. Lessons were particularly effective when teacher and peer feedback were incorporated into lesson activities.

A wide range of teaching approaches was observed and an awareness of varied learning styles was evident. Classroom behaviour was of a high standard in all lessons which contributed to a positive learning atmosphere and very good relationships between students and teachers. Literacy and numeracy strategies were observed in many lessons and were also apparent in subject plans. Almost all parents and students agreed that teaching was good in the school and a similar proportion of students agreed that their teachers encouraged them to do the best that they can.

Homework was assigned regularly and students were found to be confident in expressing their views and opinions in lessons. The enthusiasm and competence which teachers displayed in their subject areas is highly commendable. Certificate examination results are consistently good. Subject planning is of a very high quality across all subject areas and the current school focus on attainment for students was apparent in subject and whole-school plans. Moving forward, the school could orientate CPD around the use of providing formative feedback to students. This orientation would support the *attainment* focus in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, in which the school is already engaged.

There was evidence that teachers were following the new junior cycle subject specifications in English, Science and Business. In the case of English, an oral communication task and student's collection of texts have been undertaken. However, class-based assessment one (CBA) and class-based assessment two have not been assessed as advised in the English specification. In addition, no subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings have taken place. Professional time to support teachers' planning for the Junior Cycle Framework has not yet been allocated. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action. In order to ensure that students benefit from the full range of learning experiences as outlined in the English specification and as required by Circular 15/2017, it is recommended that teachers implement all aspects of the English specification, including classroom-based assessments.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1. Management

Strategies are in place to ensure that recommendations from previous reports are implemented across all subject areas. This good practice is led by the board, the senior management team and subject departments, and results in discussions at staff meetings. Student progress is now tracked and monitored and has become a focus of the self-evaluation process, in the context of student attainment. Subject departments now undertake an annual analysis of results in certificate examinations. The allocation of time to PE at senior level still needs to be increased.

3.2. Learning and teaching

The time allocation and organisational issues of SPHE at junior cycle have been addressed and the time allocation in TY Geography has been reviewed. First-year students now can experience a range of foreign languages before making choices for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes. Teaching and learning is an agenda item for all meetings of staff, board of management and parent council.

4. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The school self-evaluation process continues to inform progress in the school and has now become an embedded element in the school's development culture. Comprehensive reports and school improvement plans (SIP) have been developed in the areas of literacy, numeracy and attainment. Summary versions of these reports and improvement plans should now be shared with the school community. Virtually all teachers agreed in the survey that school self-evaluation is used to improve students' learning in the school. The school has demonstrated a very high capacity to continually improve and develop.

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;

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 is delighted with the main findings of this Whole-School Evaluation. It is particularly proud of the recognition of its very effective management, strategic leadership and middle management. The ongoing commitment of the teaching and support staff to maintaining a positive, caring and inclusive learning atmosphere is mentioned in the report is also recognised.

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 the recommendations received. The school has implemented the English specification of Junior Cycle since the inspection.

Coláiste Muire Parents Council and Student Council have already identified actions to develop communications to the other stakeholders. The Board is committed to broadening the Whole School Guidance plan. A newly formed IT committee will include development of a school-wide learning platform as part of its eLearning Plan.