

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Presentation Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Miltown Killarney Co Kerry
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61410N

Date of Evaluation: 12-05-2017



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	8, 9 and 11 May 2017.
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with board of management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Presentation Secondary School is a Catholic, voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education: An Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). The vision and ethos of Nano Nagle and Blessed Edmund Rice are very much alive and evident in the school today. The school is situated in a rural location in mid-Kerry, caters for boys and girls and has an enrolment of 561 students in the current school year. The new school building opened in the 2015/16 school year and a new senior management team has been appointed relatively recently.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with many instances of excellent practice observed and few areas for development noted.
- The work of teachers in reflecting on, and in developing their teaching practices in a positive, open manner through their involvement in a range of initiatives is excellent, although school self-evaluation (SSE) initiatives regarding teaching and learning do not yet involve all staff.
- The very strong ethos of the school, driven by the very effective board of management and senior management team, has led to a clear student-centred focus where the holistic development of each student is to the fore.
- The board of management and senior management display very good leadership in all areas of school life and both are centrally involved in advancing, sharing and challenging the development and sustaining of the school and its core values.
- While the quality of student supports is very good and a wide range of support strategies is in place, resources allocated to the school for students with special educational needs (SEN) are not allocated fully in accordance with DES circulars.
- The school is undertaking many aspects of the Framework for Junior Cycle although a number of requirements, particularly relating to the assessment of classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in English, are yet to be implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lessons learned from the many, excellent initiatives in teaching and learning should now be consolidated into manageable key strategies that can be embedded into teaching and learning practices in a sustainable manner for all teachers.

- The use of the school's allocation for SEN students should be addressed to ensure the appropriate allocation of resources aimed at maximising the benefit for these students.
- The school's SSE work should be re-focussed on learner outcomes, and the board should then recommunicate to the wider school community its plans in relation to school improvement in the context of SSE.
- A number of areas associated with the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle should be addressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management.

The board of management of the school is properly constituted and is representative of all the stakeholders in the school community. The current board was formally convened in November 2016. Board members are keenly aware of their role in advancing and promoting the ethos of the school as a faith-based school and challenging the school to meet the needs of all of its students. Guided by the trustees, the board promotes a clear commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student. Board members have accessed training regarding their roles and responsibilities. The board has been proactive in responding to the evolving needs of the school, most notably in successfully managing the transition to a new school building and in creating a strong focus on teaching and learning.

A wide range of policies has been developed and the board is clear about its role in development, ratification and review of policies. Various stakeholders are consulted as appropriate and parents reported that they feel that they have an input into policy development and review. The board has taken steps to heighten awareness around anti-bullying in the school. The school operates open and transparent practices with regard to admissions. However, some minor adjustment to the enrolment documentation to bring the policies in line with the very good practices which the school operates is recommended, specifically with regard to the removal of information which does not inform decisions regarding enrolment.

The board has overseen the implementation of strategies to enhance teaching and learning such as the increased use of instructional leadership, team teaching and peer mentoring and observation. The school feels that the use of these strategies, together with the school's use of the magenta principles, are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. It is clear that a critical mass has been reached with regard to the number of teachers involved in these initiatives, and that the consequent sharing of resources and ideas has been beneficial to all.

A broad curriculum is available in the school and the introduction of new subjects such as Metalwork and Technology is under consideration. A subject-sampling system is now in place for all practical subjects in first year, and the school plans to extend this to modern languages next year. Following careful, considered deliberation, the school has taken a decision to move to one-hour lessons from next year. This decision should be kept under review to ensure it meets the evolving needs of the school as well as curricular requirements. Some other timetabling matters should also be addressed, especially around the need to ensure that teachers hold the appropriate qualifications, as recognised by the Teaching Council, for the subjects which they are timetabled to teach. It is positive that the school intends to address these next year.

The school has an active parents' association that is very committed to enhancing the work of the school. Meetings are held regularly and very good relationships with parents exist. It is very positive that parents are frequently included in surveys from the school and the range of formal and informal communication systems in place is good. The principal's report at board meetings is very comprehensive and it is positive to note that there is an agreed report to staff and to the parents' association following board meetings. The board is aware that the school website is in need of updating to improve its accessibility and relevance.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The school's new senior management team is operating very effectively, leading the school with commitment and enthusiasm, and with the evident support of staff. The leadership of the team is very good and is informed by a vision for the school that celebrates its Christian, Catholic ethos. The senior management team works very well as a team and operates a genuinely 'open-door' policy to all members of the school community, as reported by parents, students, and staff.

Very good strategies have been put in place to empower staff and to encourage them to take leadership roles. This is particularly evident with regard to the many initiatives around teaching and learning that are in place. The senior management team has successfully promoted a culture of improvement and collaboration in teaching and learning, with the use of video coaching as part of negotiated peer-review being particularly innovative. Staff members are encouraged to avail of continuing professional development (CPD) and have done so extensively. It is positive to note that key messages from CPD are disseminated to all staff, as relevant. Teaching and learning hubs have been formed to promote developments in teaching and learning. The decision to operate as hubs is regarded as appropriate and the phased, incremental nature of teachers' involvement has been very successful. It is also considered very good practice that the larger teaching and learning group meets to discuss learning from all hubs and that there is a learning and teaching noticeboard in the staff room. Initiatives such as team teaching were rolled out in a well-considered and strategic manner, and the phased approach adopted with regard to peer mentoring has also been very effective. The senior management team is aware that a key priority for the school will be to identify key lessons learned from the many, worthwhile teaching and learning initiatives and to strategically implement these across the school. This should be progressed in order to consolidate key learning and to ensure sustainability.

The commitment, engagement and professionalism of staff is very good as is evidenced by teachers' leadership of various initiatives and support for a wide range of extracurricular activities. Analysis of student questionnaires, provided as part of this evaluation, indicates overwhelmingly positive responses to the question "Teachers encourage me to do the best I can". Similarly, an analysis of parental questionnaires indicates that the overwhelming majority of parents is happy with the school.

Very detailed subject and programme plans are in place, although it was reported that planning in relation to the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) has been impacted by industrial action.

It is suggested that planning for the implementation of team teaching is worthy of consideration by all subject departments and that all subject plans would benefit from a brief developmental section outlining short, medium and long-term areas for development and how these are to be achieved. Subject department plans also should reflect how pedagogical approaches will help to achieve SSE targets relating to teaching and learning. The assessment policy, which is currently in draft format, should be advanced.

Good reporting structures are in place and common assessments are held at Christmas and summer. Reports are sent home after class tests at mid-term and Easter, and following mock examinations in February. This is very good practice. The commitment and engagement of all staff, including administrative and ancillary staff, to creating and maintaining a positive learning environment for students, is clear.

The quality of supports available to students is very good and covers a very wide range of initiatives and support structures. There are very good supports in place for students with additional educational needs provided through team-teaching, small classes, withdrawal and other pedagogical strategies. The role of the year heads is very significant in monitoring students' progress and in providing guidance, and the work of special needs assistants (SNA's) is particularly valuable in providing support to students in all areas of school life. The mutually respectful interactions that underpin life in the school, the strong pastoral-care system underpinned by the school ethos in which all teachers feel they have a role, and the genuine interest by all in the holistic development of each individual student, are very evident.

Very good whole-school guidance planning is in place and practices in support of students include regular formal and informal meetings of key personnel, meetings with parents and good monitoring of student academic progress. While the subject-choice process appears to be well managed and student choices are facilitated as much as possible, responses from student questionnaires indicated a lower than expected level of satisfaction relating to advice and information received by students when making subject choices. This outcome should be further explored by school management.

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Transition Year (TY) programme are working well. TY work experience is well structured to provide very good opportunities for reflection and reporting. Good assessment procedures are also in place in TY involving home-based tasks, portfolio, continuous and formal assessments. The school has indicated a willingness to form additional TY classes if sufficient demand exists. This is commended. It is also suggested that the school consider introducing the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) for students that may benefit from it.

Provision for students with SEN is very good and includes very close liaising with feeder primary schools. The SEN co-ordinator manages all aspects of SEN provision in the school effectively. Co-operative teaching teams have recently been introduced to provide focused and additional supports to class groups of students identified as needing such support. This work currently centres on English and Mathematics in one class per year group in junior cycle and in fifth year. There are plans for sixth year to be included next year. This is very positive. The establishment of a core team of teachers for SEN is also a recent positive development.

There is a substantial, additional allocation to the school to provide supports to students with SEN. However, a significant number of these hours are used for the creation of mainstream class groups, usually becoming larger ordinary level class groups in particular subjects, rather than being allocated specifically to support students with SEN. As referenced in circular letter 0070/2014 and 0014/2017, the additional allocation to provide supports for SEN should be used in its entirety for the intended purpose. A greater emphasis should be placed on providing additional teaching supports, through a combination of team-teaching, in-class supports and small-group and/or individual withdrawal, as appropriate to the identified needs of the individual students.

There is an active student council in place who feel able to go to senior management with any concerns communicated to them. Students feel that they are encouraged to do their best and that if they had a problem they could advocate through the student council or through their parents. However,

responses to student questionnaires indicate that the number of students who feel that they have a voice in the decision-making processes in the school is very low. The school should therefore consider, as appropriate, how the student voice can be improved.

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*.

1.3. Management of facilities

The new school building is bright and welcoming and maintained in excellent condition. The school has a very good canteen and the school is keen to support local enterprises regarding catering facilities. An additional pull-down screen in classrooms for data projectors would be useful so that teachers do not have to erase material written on the whiteboard if they want to use the data projector. There are two dedicated rooms available to provide additional supports to students with SEN. These should be appropriately resourced and used as much as possible for teaching and learning of students with SEN and for the display and storage of these students' work. The school library should be developed as soon as practicable and it is noted that this, commendably, has already been prioritised for fundraising by the parents' association.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good with very positive interactions between teachers and students, and among students themselves, being a notable feature. Students were well-engaged and co-operative in lessons and teachers made very good attempts to make learning relevant to students' lives. Lessons were very well prepared, including a wide range of purposeful class resource materials and thoughtful planning of the lesson structure. Very good classroom management routines were observed, informed by teachers' knowledge of their students.

Very good teaching methodologies were in use with excellent practice seen in a number of lessons. Questioning was a key strategy used to elicit and develop learning. Very good use of 'wait time' was observed and it is clear that work in which the school has been engaged regarding the use of the magenta principles is having a clear impact. In the few instances, where recommendations were made regarding the use of questioning, these centred on the need for balance between general and directed, and lower and higher order questions.

Very good constructivist teaching approaches were seen in a number of lessons with a shared agreement on learning from lessons often being used effectively to revise and reinforce learning. Excellent use of pair and group work was seen and teachers were adept at managing this and assisting students. Teachers regularly checked student responses during group and pair work in order to evaluate and support understanding. In some lessons, the assignment of roles to students was suggested to support their engagement. Very good teacher demonstrations, explanations and modelling of answers were a significant aid to learning. The target language was used effectively in almost all language lessons observed and these incorporated aural, oral, reading and writing tasks. However, some concerns were expressed by students, during a focus-group interview, regarding the time given to conversation and use of target language in some lessons.

The consistent use of learning intentions as an area for development is recommended. In particular, this could be used in tandem with greater use of differentiation in task assignment at various levels, facilitating student choice. Such teaching practices empower students to make appropriate choices and to take ownership of their own learning. In this regard, the use of note making rather than note taking was recommended in a minority of lessons as this facilitates independent learning and active listening.

While very good use of information and communications technologies (ICT) by teachers was evident, classroom observation and student responses to questionnaires indicate a lower than expected level of ICT use in lessons by students. It is therefore recommended that the school investigate strategies to promote greater student use of ICT in lessons.

Students demonstrated learning through very good completion of tasks set, through involvement in group work, completion of homework and excellent responses to questioning. While these strategies were effective, care should be taken to ensure that teacher questioning, in particular, is not over used as a teaching approach as this could lead to a less enjoyable learning experience for students.

There was evidence that teachers were following the Junior Cycle subject specifications in English, Science and Business Studies. Formal professional time to support teachers' planning for the implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework has not yet been allocated. In the case of English, an oral communication assessment task and students' collection of texts have been undertaken. However, CBA 1 and CBA 2 have not been assessed as advised in the English specification. In addition, no subject learning and review (SLAR) meetings have taken place. The reason for shortcomings in the implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework and the English specification 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 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

There is a clearly evident policy to implement previous recommendations and most recommendations have been implemented. It was reported that an outstanding recommendation from a previous report regarding the need to provide Physical Education to sixth year students will be addressed in the next school year. It is also positive to note that recommendations from reports are disseminated to the whole staff.

3.2. Learning and teaching

Recommendations made in previous reports regarding teaching and learning have also been clearly implemented. As a result, it was common practice to see learning intentions for lessons shared with students at the start of lessons. Some good use of assessment for learning (AfL) practices were observed, especially with regard to group work and collaborative learning. The target language was used in most language lessons and very good use of visual material to facilitate learning was observed.

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

Much good work has been undertaken in the area of SSE, particularly regarding literacy and teaching methodologies, but work on numeracy needs to recommence. The school has very good capacity to reflect and implement change for improvement. However, the SSE process should be a whole-school, developmental process; currently, much of the work is taking place within teaching hubs. A requirement, as per circular letters 0040/2012 and 0040/2016 and the associated guidelines, is that the SSE process identifies an area for improvement, focusing on learner outcomes. The teaching approaches to bring about improvement should not be the intended focus for improvement but should be regarded as the actions which will lead to the desired improvement for learners. The plan for improvement, therefore, should set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) targets, focusing on learner outcomes. The actions and targets should be monitored and reviewed and actions changed if necessary. An annual, summary SSE report, including the outcomes of the process and the next improvement plan should again be shared by the board with the school community.

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 <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 and staff were delighted to receive this report on the WSE MLL PP undertaken recently. Our school community found the evaluation to be a constructive, positive and affirming experience.

We are very pleased that the report captures the excellent student-centred focus of our school culture and ethos, as well as the high standard of learning and teaching provided by our dedicated and committed 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 WSE MLL process has enabled us to reflect on our future development in many ways. Taking account of the recommendations in the report, the following improvements have been made:

- Our phased approach to the development of learning and teaching will, as planned, see a further expansion of the Magenta Principles/Video Coaching programme in 2017/18, to include the few members of staff who have not yet had the opportunity to formally engage.
- Our allocation for SEN has now been restructured, as advised, to ensure maximum benefit to students with SEN, including a phased approach to Team Teaching in additional subjects.
- The SSE School Improvement Plan has been re-focused on learner outcomes and will be re-communicated to the wider school community.
- Since the withdrawal of industrial action in June, all staff are now fully engaged in the new Junior Cycle Framework.