An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Mount Sackville Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Tower Road Chapelizod Dublin 20
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60120W

Date of Evaluation: 14-11-2018

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. 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 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 – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	14-11-2018
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

Mount Sackville Secondary School is a fee-paying school for girls with a current enrolment of 661 students. The school was founded by the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in 1864 and is now under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, the Leaving Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and a compulsory Transition Year.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of school management and leadership is very good, with excellent practice in the promotion of students' holistic development.
- Enabling each student to reach her full potential spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially is the highest priority.
- A highly effective student-support structure is in place but the formal structures for special education needs (SEN), including models of support, planning and review require development.
- School management and staff are strongly committed to providing a supportive learning environment; high expectations are set for student achievement but systems to track attainment should be formalised.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with many instances of excellent practice noted.
- While the school has a very good capacity for school improvement, the potential of the formal school self-evaluation (SSE) process is not yet fully realised.

Recommendations

- Senior management should establish a core team for co-ordinating SEN supports with a view to improving planning and communication, and reviewing models of support.
- A formal system for tracking student attainment that involves input from year heads, subject teams, the guidance team and the students themselves should be implemented, particularly in light of a recently initiated review of senior cycle.
- A teaching and learning team should be established to oversee strategic action planning for improvement and to further embed effective classroom practice.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of school management and leadership is very good.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership for learning and teaching is very good. The senior management team (SMT), consisting of the principal and a deputy principal appointed this year, are ambitious and proactive for the school. They work very hard to manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. They have a partnership approach to their work and communicate very effectively.

There is a positive culture of professional learning among staff which is supported by senior management who encourage and support teachers to develop professionally and extend their teaching and learning practices. The staff has engaged well with curricular changes at junior cycle and a peer review programme is in place in the Irish and modern language departments. Commendably, plans are already in place to extend these good practices to other departments. The school has established initiatives in teacher induction programmes such as *Droichead* and a mentoring system is in place which is supported by the detailed staff handbook. A more strategic approach to sharing practice from continuing professional development (CPD) would support school development further. To facilitate this, a teaching and learning team should be established to bring together the learning from CPD initiatives and to use the school's SSE process to embed effective practice in key pedagogical priorities.

There is a good transition programme from primary to post-primary for first-year students including a sports camp, induction and mentoring. Inclusion of all students into the school community is a key priority. The SMT has recently introduced subject-planning templates to further develop collaboration and improve teaching and learning. While teachers are working collaboratively, there is a variance in the quality of subject plans.

School management endeavours to provide a broad range of learning opportunities, with a commendable emphasis placed on providing for the holistic development of learners.

The care of students is a significant strength in the school and central to the school's ethos. All staff play a key role in supporting students' needs and ensuring the girls feel part of the school community. Prefects provide valuable support to first-year students. Enabling each student to reach her full potential academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially in a happy secure environment, is the school's mission and its highest priority. This was attested to by the board of management, senior management, staff and students. To achieve this, the school provides a very wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, including an innovative range of leadership and committee roles for students. The tutor and dean system are key to supporting educational and personal well-being. Deans meet regularly with senior management and tutors. The student-support team provides valuable support and meets regularly as a team and with deans. There is a mentoring programme for TY students that is supported by the dean structure.

The school's well-being programme is a particular strength. The programme encompasses timetabled lessons in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), Choir, Drama and Digital Literacy, as well as weekly tutor period. A wide range of supplementary initiatives and activities is provided to support and enhance the well-being programme including whole-school initiatives. SPHE and RSE in junior cycle are delivered as part of the well-being programme. In senior cycle, RSE is delivered through the RE

programme. While planning documents indicate that there is a six week programme for RSE in senior cycle, the delineation between the RE and RSE programmes are unclear. It is suggested that the SPHE/RSE subject department develops a module for RSE in senior cycle, with the use of external facilitators to support RSE teachers in their own delivery of a planned SPHE/RSE programme in line with Circular Letter 0023/2010. The RSE policy should be reviewed to reflect this.

High expectations are set for student achievement and students are encouraged to do their best with some very good attainment outcomes noted. The school's award night, 'Great Expectations', acknowledges student performance. Recent improvements in reporting procedures have taken place. However, there is scope to further formalise a system for academic tracking and monitoring involving the guidance team, deans and students themselves. Target setting could form part of the process and supporting data from entrance, summative and certificate examinations could inform future planning for improvement.

Special tuition is given to those with exemptions from Irish and short-term interventions are in place to support SEN students. Evidence from lesson observations, and concerns highlighted in parent and student questionnaire, suggests that in-class support is an area for development. While the work of the student-support team in relation to SEN is acknowledged, the school should establish a SEN core team made up of the SEN co-ordinator, resource personnel, representatives from SMT and guidance team. This team could meet regularly to review the current models of SEN provision used in the school with a view to the strategic development of greater in-class support. There is scope to support the work of the co-ordinator by exploring best practice in the area of planning, monitoring and reporting. The team could identify ways in which teachers, deans and tutors can provide further support for students of all abilities to ensure their learning needs are being met.

The TY programme offers a range of interesting learning experiences. Care should be taken that aspects of the TY curriculum are not explicitly taken from the Leaving Certificate curriculum. A review of TY, as part of the overall review of senior cycle and where valuable research has already taken place, has been identified as a key area for development for the school.

A key strength of the school is its committed and hard-working staff which support the SMT in providing a holistic education for students, evident particularly in the provision of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities for students. This provision greatly supports a positive learning environment in the school.

Managing the organisation

The board, was appointed in 2016 and is highly committed to the school. There is very good communication between the SMT and the board. Although preoccupied by a serious investigation for the last three years, it has had an effective oversight role in policy formulation and in developing and maintaining facilities. There is potential to extend its oversight of the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the area of SSE and the review of senior cycle.

The board oversees the development and implementation of policies which inform the day-to-day running of the school. This work would be supported by the establishment of a more formal system of policy review: priority should be given to reviewing and updating policies in RSE and SEN and a review of the admission policy in line with circular 0070/2014.

There is good provision for appropriate use of ICT in the school and an impressive digital literacy initiative for first and second years has recently been introduced as part of the well-being programme. The school is in the process of introducing a cloud-based service to enhance the sharing of resources. It is timely now to move towards digitisation of planning documentation. A digital learning plan now needs to be prepared, as per circular 11/2018, to outline the school's targeted,

incremental embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment and improve learner outcomes.

Leading school development.

Those in leadership and management roles are aware of the school's changing needs. However an overarching strategic plan has not been developed. The board of management should oversee the formulation and implementation of a strategic plan for future school improvement, to be driven by senior management, in consultation with staff, parents and students.

A number of worthy initiatives have taken place in the school but their efficacy have been compromised because a sharper focus on collaborative evidenced-based action planning is needed. This can be supported by the establishment of a teaching and learning team, which could explore ways to best use the school's SSE process to embed effective practice in key pedagogical priorities.

The parents association is well established, hardworking and committed to the school. The recent re-launching of the school website, that includes a section for the parents association, will help to improve communication with the wider parent body. For example, summary SSE school improvement plans and reports could be disseminated to parents through the website.

Developing leadership capacity

The middle-management team has increased significantly in recent times. Teachers, both post-holders and non-post holders, are encouraged to take on leadership roles and to undertake professional development in areas relating to both leadership and developing classroom practice. Very good support structures are in place for the induction of new teachers which includes lesson observations and provision of resources including a very thorough staff handbook.

The student voice is valued at whole-school level and there is a particular interest in the development of young women as leaders. Students are offered opportunities to get involved in leadership through the prefect system, the student council, the Ember group and the well-being group.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Twenty-two lessons were observed during the course of the evaluation. The quality of the teaching and learning observed was mostly very good and there were instances of exemplary practices in many of those lessons. The main areas for development include promotion of the student voice, in-class support for learning needs and a more consistent approach to assessment for learning.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Throughout the evaluation, students displayed motivation and a willingness to learn. The rapport between students and teachers was extremely positive which supported positive learning environments.

In many lessons, the learning intentions of the lesson were shared with students, enabling students to be part of their learning journey. In the best lessons, the learning intentions were student-focused with clear links to prior learning.

Almost all teachers endeavoured to promote active learning through collaborative learning but often, the potential for students to share their learning was not maximised. Where best practice was observed the lessons were dynamic environments where students were active participants in their

own learning. They demonstrated keen interest in the lesson topic and a strong desire to learn more. This was supported in a few instances, particularly at junior cycle, by opportunities to research and present their work during the lesson.

When working collaboratively, the best learner outcomes were observed where students were given time to think and reflect independently, and ample time was given for students to share their learning with the class and engage in group discussion. Discussions should now take place, at both subject-team and whole-school level, on how best practice can be shared and achieved in the area of active and independent learning. The culture of collaboration inherent in the school should support this process.

Some very good examples of assessment for learning (AfL) techniques, especially in the use of mini-whiteboards, targeted questioning techniques and some good examples of written formative feedback, were noted in students' copybooks, although the quality and consistency varied considerably across all lessons observed. The provision of regular written formative feedback on students work remains an area for development. Consideration, at team level, should be given to sharing and documenting formative assessment practices.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Lessons were well prepared and structured.

Question and answer sessions were observed in all lessons. Best practice was noted where students were appropriately challenged through the use of probing, higher-order, and directed questioning. There were, however, a number of lessons where the questions resulted in information recall alone. All teachers should ensure that there is an appropriate balance between global and directed questioning or between higher and lower questioning so that all students are appropriately challenged.

ICT was used mainly in the form of static presentations. There is significant scope to further develop innovative and interactive ICT practices in the classroom.

Encouragingly, most teachers endeavoured to ensure a good balance between instruction and student activity. However, at times during some lessons, the structure was such that students had few opportunities for active participation, leading to students being more passive and less likely to contribute. This was especially, though not always, the case at senior cycle. The very good seating arrangements in most classrooms facilitated ease of organisation and communication within the groups. Good practice was noted where teachers circulated during group-work activities giving individual help. Further differentiation strategies are recommended to ensure that all students are challenged to reach their full potential. The development of systems of in-class support has been discussed earlier in this report and in the context of differentiated teaching methodologies and assessment techniques, have relevance here too.

In many lessons there was good reference to key words, in particularly subject-specific terminology.

A range of subject department plans were reviewed during the evaluation. Recent advances in consistency and uniformity regarding planning templates are indicative of the increasingly collaborative nature of subject teams in this school. Digitisation of all subject plans is now underway. There is work to be done in ensuring consistency across all plans, specifically relating to the meaningful linking of learning intentions with methodologies and assessment.

Implementing a collaborative approach to assessment is an effective way to support students' learning and this was evident during the evaluation.

An analysis of students' levels of uptake and achievement in the certificate examinations is carried out each year by subject teams, supported by a new template devised by the SMT. Some subject teams have engaged really well and strategically use the data to inform teaching and learning, but this is not consistent across all subject teams. Consideration should be given to the sharing of good planning practices between teams at whole school level. Moreover, it is recommended that all subject plans be informed by the overall strategic school plan.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management:

Very good progress has been made on many of the recommendations from previous inspections. Students' understanding of democratic structures in the school has been enhanced and the student voice is now promoted in more sustained and routine ways. The student council elections are now conducted as a whole-school event, run by CSPE students.

Consideration has been given to curriculum developments such as the recently initiated review of senior cycle. The breadth of the first-year curriculum has been reviewed to ensure adequate time provision for Junior Cycle specifications. The provision of double periods for languages is yet to be addressed.

A few recommendations are yet to be fully addressed, including the development of a system of target setting and tracking to monitor students' individual progress in subjects, and the review of the RSE policy and admissions policy to reflect inclusive practice.

Teaching and Learning:

Good progress has been made in using attainment data to inform planning in some subject departments, and a common planning template has been developed by senior management to encourage this. Digital literacy is now taught as module to first-year, second-year and TY students, but there is still considerable scope to strengthen the effective use of ICT in lessons.

Formative assessment strategies were used in lessons during the evaluation but there is still scope to embed this more consistently, particularly in the area of written formative feedback.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The potential of the formal school self-evaluation (SSE) process is not yet fully realised. The staff has promoted worthy initiatives in literacy, numeracy and formative assessment. However, a more strategic, evidence-based approach to sharing practice and planning for improvements in teaching and learning is needed. In this context, the potential of the six-step SSE process needs to be fully realised. As already highlighted earlier in this report, it would be worthwhile to establish a teaching-and-learning team to lead a whole-school adoption of key identified pedagogical practices.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a very good capacity for, and commitment to, improvement. School management and staff show a pride in their work, a strong commitment to the school, and are focused clearly on maintaining a learning environment where students flourish and achieve their potential.

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 *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 school community welcomes the overwhelmingly positive report.

The Board welcomes the inspector's finding that the Principal and Deputy Principal provide "excellent practice in the promotion of student's holistic development "and are "ambitious and proactive for the school" and recognises the dedication of the leadership team and their tireless efforts to enhance and develop Mount Sackville as a community of learning.

The high standards and high expectations for student achievement noted by the Inspectors in the report provides affirmation for our committed, dedicated and professional teaching staff and the excellent attainment and achievement of students past and present. The board is delighted that the inspectors have recognised the quality of teaching and learning ", the" highly effective student support team" and our exemplary Wellbeing programme.

Finally, as a school founded on Gospel Values by the sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and now under the trusteeship of Le Chéile we are particularly pleased that the Inspectorate affirmed that
"Enabling each student to reach her full potential spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially is the highest priority."

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 in the report and has put the following in place to address them

- The school is formalising its system of Academic tracking -this is being led by the Deans, and Guidance Department.

- The Board will prioritise the establishment of a Strategic Plan for future development.

- The Principal will work collaboratively with the Learning Support coordinator to establish an SEN team.

- A new Teaching and Learning team led by the Deputy Principal has been established and is providing a whole school approach to the implementation of the school's digital learning plan.