

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Paul's College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Sybil Hill Raheny Dublin
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60290B

**Date of Evaluation: 09-05-2019**



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**An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 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	07-09 May 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with board of management</li> <li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li> <li>• Meetings with key staff</li> <li>• Review of relevant documents</li> <li>• Student focus-group interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with parents</li> <li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li> <li>• Examination of students' work</li> <li>• Interaction with students</li> <li>• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers</li> </ul>

### School context

St Paul's College is a voluntary secondary school for boys, founded in 1950 under the patronage of the Vincentian Fathers. The school serves Raheny and surrounding areas, with some students travelling from further afield, and it operates within the common admission system for the Howth Deanery. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Enrolment is on an upward trend and currently stands at 588.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good: governance is highly effective but there is scope to further share and distribute leadership responsibilities.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, including commendable innovations at junior cycle; validation of the TY programme is an area for development.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good: the strengths identified can be harnessed to develop and extend practice.
- Students are learning in a supportive and well-managed environment, but there is scope to strengthen provision for students with additional and special educational needs.
- Implementation of recommendations in previous reports has been good overall.
- The school has good capacity to devise and implement any action plans necessary to ensure continuing improvement.

#### Recommendations

- A stronger partnership approach to leading school development should be cultivated at senior management and, in turn, at middle leadership levels.
- A system of school validation and certification of the TY programme should be developed.
- To build on the good practice observed, teachers should further develop teaching approaches that enable students to be active and deep learners.
- To ensure high-quality learning experiences for students with additional and special educational needs, teaching resources and practices should be deployed in a more targeted and structured way.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The quality of school leadership and management is good overall. Elements of highly effective leadership practices were noted at board, senior management and teacher level. There is an evident commitment to school development and to the effective management of change, but there is also scope for more co-operative practices to enhance the collective impact of the senior management team, and for further development of middle leadership roles.

#### **Leading learning and teaching**

Leadership of teaching and learning is good. The commitment of the board, senior management team and teaching staff to high-quality experiences and outcomes for learners was evident during the evaluation. The board is well informed on current educational matters, including junior cycle reform and changes in assessment. School management has been active in investigating professional development opportunities for the teaching staff, and the board is supporting whole-staff engagement in an online programme to promote active and reflective learning.

The school's long-established advisory board of studies works well as a forum to consider and plan for developments in curriculum and in teaching, learning and assessment. Chaired by the school planning co-ordinator, it is a voluntary body whose members have shown great interest in key areas of teaching and learning. It is worth considering how the good work done by this board could be further enhanced. A review of its composition and of its mechanisms for communicating and consulting with the whole staff would be helpful in this regard. There is commendable alignment between its work and the school's self-evaluation processes, and its focus could in time be more closely connected to the implementation phase of action planning.

The school offers a broad curriculum with a very good range of subjects, including a number of modern foreign languages, sciences and technology subjects. School leaders have been innovative in their approach at junior cycle, introducing a number of short courses and also adapting traditional assessment practices to respond to changed requirements. Subject sampling was in place in first year but was discontinued some years ago. Given the commitment to providing students with rich learning experiences, it would be worthwhile to look again at possible means of subject sampling so that first-year students could make informed and suitable choices from the optional subjects available.

The school values the Transition Year (TY), running it as a compulsory programme. Parents and students spoke appreciatively of the opportunities it presents for varied learning experiences, including subject sampling, and for personal growth. However, to some extent students viewed it as 'a year out' and teachers identified problems at times with TY students' work and progress owing to frequent absences from class. It is necessary to strengthen the perception of TY as integral to the school's curriculum. School leaders should develop a system of school validation and certification of the full range of the TY programme: core, optional and extended learning. The Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement might serve as a model in this regard.

Good and reflective systems for student support and care are in place, and measures to enhance students' wellbeing are being implemented. The results of a recent wellbeing survey have been carefully analysed and used to inform planning and practice. The student support team brings together key personnel including the school's guidance and chaplaincy services. As recommended in a recent guidance inspection, more regular scheduled meetings of this team would assist in providing a co-ordinated approach to supporting students who come to their attention.

## **Managing the organisation**

The quality of governance is very good overall. Close co-operation between the trustees, the board of management and the principal is reflected in the board minutes, and was evident in meetings held during the evaluation. The shared focus of this co-operation is to provide the best possible learning environment for students.

The board of management works effectively and efficiently, operating as a forum where a range of perspectives informs discussion and decision-making. The board provides good management of human, physical and financial resources overall, and has overseen improvements in facilities and resources, including the school's digital infrastructure.

An aspect of resource management requiring attention is the use of the teaching resource allocated to support students with additional and special educational needs. Currently, the resources are not being fully and appropriately used. A more targeted and structured delivery of support is necessary to ensure that the use of the resource hours is consistent with the principles of the Resource Allocation Model and the requirements of the Department's Circular 0014/2017, and is providing high-quality learning experiences to meet the range of students' needs.

The permanent section of the school plan, comprising statutory and other policies, is in good order. A cycle of policy development, implementation and review has been established. Teachers, students and parents are consulted on relevant policies, although student and parent involvement could be further developed.

The current code of behaviour was adopted in 2018 and its explicit aim is to create and maintain a positive learning environment. Students were very clear about the school rules, their conduct during the evaluation was very creditable, and the prevailing atmosphere was orderly and pleasant. Aspects of the code of behaviour merit further review to strengthen its positive impact on school life; for example, the effectiveness of sanctions, especially detention, should be evaluated.

## **Leading school development**

The school has experienced significant change in the last five years, both internal and Department-driven, including changes in the senior management team and teaching staff, and the introduction of the new junior cycle. The existing and growing responsiveness to change evident during the evaluation is a strength in the school, and places all those with leadership roles in a good position to direct school development effectively.

The school's commitment to high expectations for its students is very clear in the mission statement: 'Achieving academic excellence in a caring environment'. It is laudable that the concepts of excellence and care are given such prominence, and they inform much of the school's ongoing developmental work in teaching and learning, and in promoting student wellbeing. However, the term 'academic' can be interpreted very narrowly. It is therefore suggested that, when next reviewing the mission statement, school leadership consider including an explicit reference to learning for all.

The principal and deputy principal carry out their respective responsibilities effectively and conscientiously. They ensure that the school runs smoothly and are committed to developing and enhancing it as a learning community. The complementarity of their skills is evident in their leadership and management roles within the school. However, the shared leadership model set out in the Department's Leadership and Management Circular (0003/2018) has not yet been achieved. A stronger partnership approach to leading school development would greatly benefit the school and, to this end, it is recommended that, with the support of the board of management, the senior management team set aside time at regular intervals to reflect on and build a workable shared leadership model.

The school has a committed and active parents' association, and school leadership sees it as a key contributor to the school's lived ethos. Regular meetings are attended by senior management, and communication with the association and the wider parent body is good. The association is a great resource for policy development in relevant areas of school life and, while it has had some involvement with certain policies, greater involvement would be beneficial.

The school has good links with its past pupils and with the community and uses these to extend learning opportunities for students. There is highly effective contact and communication with its feeder schools, and transition into the school is very well managed.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

The board and senior management team show keen awareness of the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for leadership and are correspondingly willing to distribute leadership responsibilities. For the most part, there is evident willingness to accept these responsibilities, and very good practice was noted in distributed leadership of teaching and learning, especially in the areas of curriculum change and school self-evaluation.

The centrality of the year head position within the school structures was validated in the recent post review conducted to meet the provisions of Circular 0003/2018. Year heads are recognised, and recognise themselves, as having lead responsibility for overseeing students' attendance, personal development, behaviour and application to work. There is work to do in fully developing a shared understanding of all facets of the role as set out in the board's 'roles, responsibilities and objectives' document. Year heads currently do not have a formal meeting schedule. It is advisable to provide some meeting time to enable year heads to tap into the collective wisdom of the team so that this significant leadership role can be developed consistently, and can in turn inform the ongoing discussion of the tutor role and its implementation.

Very good supports are in place for student (PME) teachers and newly-qualified teachers. The school's involvement with teacher education institutions to provide placements for PMEs and its participation in the Droichead programme for newly-qualified teachers has been very positive and has enabled productive interactions among teachers to combine experience and innovation.

Students have opportunities for leadership, through the prefect system, senior students' mentoring of first years, and participation in a range of co-curricular activities and initiatives such as Gaisce. Interaction with students and responses to the student survey conducted as part of the evaluation indicate that there is scope for greater consultation with students on teaching and learning, so that student voice is clearly heard in the core work of the school.

## **2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **Quality of Teaching and Learning**

Twenty-two lessons were observed, covering all years and programmes, and including core, optional, practical and non-examination subjects. The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with elements of exemplary practice noted in a significant minority of lessons. In a few lessons the quality was adequate. No practice observed was less than satisfactory.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

The very positive relationships and interactions between teachers and students in the lessons observed supported productivity and wellbeing. Classrooms were affirming and safe learning environments where students were at ease when reading aloud, asking for clarification, or answering questions.

Collegial student collaboration was a feature of more than half of the lessons. Students benefited from working together and were happy to share their knowledge and to assist their peers. There is potential to develop student collaboration to support learning further.

Students demonstrated a good level of knowledge and skills acquisition. Many lessons were appropriately focused on consolidating students' learning in the final term of the school year, and students were confident in asking questions and looking for further explanations in areas where they were unsure. The consolidation of learning was most effective where it focused on deepening students' understanding, and not merely on practising answers. This approach was taken in a significant minority of lessons and should be extended.

Practices observed during the evaluation were deemed to be very effective when they led to high levels of engagement and enjoyment, purposeful learning activities, and opportunities for students to reflect on and assess their own learning. The learning behaviours and activities described below, noted in about one-third of lessons, are valuable, and the practices that promote them should be further integrated into the learning environment.

Learner experiences were of very good quality in lessons where students engaged in learning activities which were challenging but sufficiently engaging to encourage them to persist. A key contributing factor was students' clear understanding of the purpose of the activity and the intended 'product'. In highly effective lessons students showed very good capacity to lead their own learning. In these lessons students engaged in inquiry, co-operative work, and reporting, critiquing and assessing their learning. Students' readiness to pose questions, to suggest solutions, and to try out different approaches was noted in these lessons.

Students generally demonstrated an awareness of themselves as learners, and a sense of responsibility for their own learning. They came to lessons well prepared, and got down to work readily. Students took pride in their work and showed interest in improving it. Junior cycle students in many instances demonstrated an understanding of success criteria and how to apply them to critiquing and developing their work. A greater focus throughout the school on enabling this level of learner efficacy would support the existing culture of high expectations for students' learning.

To further enhance the learning environment and the quality of learner experiences and outcomes, emphasis should be placed on facilitating students to interrogate topics more deeply and to engage more frequently in problem-solving and discovery-based learning.

### **Teachers' individual and collective practice**

In most lessons a good range of methodologies was used. Teachers demonstrated and modelled desired outcomes, selected appropriate video and audio clips and developed some very useful work activities to scaffold learning. In the highly effective lessons students were provided with tasks designed to promote active learning, but students' participation was observed to be somewhat passive in a significant minority of lessons. Teachers should develop together a more robust focus on greater active engagement across lessons.

Developing formative instructional practices has been a key focus for the school in recent times. Some highly effective use of learning intentions and graphic organisers, combined with a clear emphasis on literacy and numeracy elements was observed in a significant minority of lessons. In the majority of lessons, there remained scope to further embed practices that enable teachers to identify learning needs and to modify instruction accordingly.

Some very good use of questioning for the purpose of assessing learning was observed. At its most effective, questioning was used to promote higher-order thinking and to consolidate learning. Questioning would be further enhanced by allowing more time for students to consider the possibilities for responses and by further promoting debate and discussion.

Co-operative teaching is a developing strategy within the school and there is a commendable openness to supporting diverse needs in this manner in lessons. Across mainstream and special education lessons, there was scope to plan to support learners' identified needs in a more targeted way. The existing spirit of inclusion should be further refined by ensuring that all teachers plan to support the specific needs of learners.

Whilst teachers had very good knowledge of their students' needs, lessons generally provided the same tasks and content to all. In a small number of lessons elements of differentiation were noted, including homework and worksheets designed to scaffold or extend learning. Further development of differentiated practice is recommended, to ensure that all students experience both challenge and success as learners.

Classroom environments are orderly and well-maintained and many have engaging displays and subject-related artefacts which support learning. Digital media were used frequently to present information and to provide homework and revision materials; in a small number of lessons, text presented digitally was not easy to read. Teachers should consider how students could further utilise digital media for learning in lessons.

Subject and programme planning are well established in the school. Some junior cycle subject plans reflect the language of the new junior cycle framework, while others focus mainly on subject content and lack detail on differentiation or assessment strategies. Minutes of subject department meetings are detailed and many evidence an advanced degree of department planning and shared reflection. The good practice noted supports the implementation of curriculum change and should be extended.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

#### **Leadership and Management**

Recommendations from previous evaluations have been well implemented overall. A Whole-School Evaluation took place in 2011, with a Follow-Through inspection in 2015. This found that good or significant progress had been made in implementing almost all recommendations, but with limited progress in subject department planning.

Recommendations requiring action by senior management in the 2018 Guidance inspection should be considered for the next academic year, including those relating to more regular student support team meetings, and the timetabling of guidance lessons in sixth year.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

There has been good progress in subject department planning since the 2015 Follow-Through inspection. A sample review of plans showed that many subject departments are using a common template to support consistent approaches to junior cycle subject plans. The minutes of subject department meetings demonstrate that these often include developmental discussions, and not merely organisational matters. A number of subject plans contain good reflective practices, in which teachers assess the success or otherwise of approaches taken in the classroom. These commendable aspects of planning should be extended.

Recommendations on the greater use of learning intentions, success criteria and differentiation were made in recent subject inspections in Guidance, History and Art. Progress has been made in these areas, but focus should be maintained on them as there is scope for further improvement.



The school has taken recommendations seriously. It is worth ensuring that both good practice identified and suggestions for improvement in subject inspection reports are shared with the whole teaching staff.

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

##### **The School's Self-Evaluation Process**

The school has engaged well with self-evaluation. The school self-evaluation process is clearly linked to improvements and developments in teaching, learning and assessment. Good data-gathering practice has been established, and there is growing understanding among those leading the process of how to analyse and drill down into evidence gathered. The analysis of the recent wellbeing survey exemplifies this approach, as does the ongoing analysis of students' performance in standardised assessments.

The self-evaluation process has been closely and soundly aligned to the work of the advisory board of studies. A continued focus on the whole-school implementation of selected actions, and on assessing the impact of actions taken, will add further value to the process.

##### **The School's Capacity for Improvement**

The school has good and in many ways very good capacity to bring about any improvements necessary. A reflective and development-focused culture is now well established, and school leaders have demonstrated the skills required to manage change successfully.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board welcomes the report and acknowledges its positive and affirming nature. The Board appreciates the many strengths recognised, particularly the highly effective leadership practices at board, senior management and teacher level.

The Board is pleased with recognition of the following:

- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, including commendable innovations at junior cycle
- The school's commitment to high expectations for its students is very clear in the mission statement
- The very positive relationships and interactions between teachers and students in the lessons observed supported productivity and wellbeing
- Students demonstrated an awareness of themselves as learners and a sense of responsibility for their own learning
- Students took pride in their work and showed interest in improving it
- Good and reflective systems for student support and care are in place and measures to enhance students' wellbeing are being developed.
- Minutes of subject department plans show evidence of developmental discussions and good reflective practices
- There is highly effective contact and communication with its feeder schools. Transition into the school is very well managed with a newly developed induction programme in place
- The school has a committed and active parents' association. School leadership sees it as a key contributor to the school's lived ethos
- The school has very good capacity to bring about any improvements necessary with a reflective and development-focused culture now well established
- School leaders have demonstrated the skills required to manage change effectively

## **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

- The Board of Management has initiated a review of the language in both the school Mission Statement and the Code of Behaviour to reflect the positive environment which underpins school life
- A trial Restorative Practice programme has been initiated in fifth year as a means of replacing the emphasis on detention as the principal means of imposing sanctions
- The Principal and Deputy-Principal have organised a formal meeting routine to plan for school development and to deal with day to day matters. This will feed into more frequent meetings with the middle leadership team
- The Special Education Team is reviewing its use of resources to allow it to target the specific needs of the students in a whole school supportive manner.
- The Student Support team meets weekly to discuss student matters
- Validation of the Transition Year programme is being reviewed with three strands of assessment being implemented to cement the learning and developmental content of the year.

## 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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;