

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Árdscoil La Salle
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Raheny Road Raheny Dublin 5
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60291D

Date of Evaluation: 17-12-2018



**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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Date of inspection	17-12-2018
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

Ardcoil La Salle, with an enrolment of 191 students, is a co-educational secondary school under the trusteeship of Le Chéile, A Catholic Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school is a recent entrant into the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme; the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The board of management supports the school well; it is thorough in its oversight role regarding managing finances, child protection and school improvement.
- The quality of school leadership for learning is good and the overall quality of school management is very good; aspects of DEIS planning, including at subject department level, need to be refined.
- The partnerships developed by the school are significant strengths in supporting the student experience.
- Teaching resources provided to the school to support students with special educational needs are being underutilised.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall with elements of very effective practice observed; structures to support the sharing of best practice are under developed.
- There has been good implementation of recommendations made in previous evaluations and the school has very good capacity for improvement.

Recommendations

- The deployment of teaching resources for students with special educational needs should be reviewed to ensure appropriate use of all the resources allocated to the school in line with Circular 0014/2017.
- The Board should develop strategies to monitor the DEIS action plan to ensure oversight of DEIS targets and analysis of student outcomes related to these targets.
- The highly effective teaching strategies evident in some lessons, particularly those that promote active and student-centred learning, should be shared at whole-school level.
- Subject departments should utilise all available data trends to set targets and develop action plans to support improvements in student outcomes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The quality of school leadership for learning is good and the overall quality of school management is very good.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The Board oversees the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum for the school and has made commendable efforts to provide a wide range of subject options to students. Students are offered experiences of the world of work through the optional TY programme and LCVP. The school is currently investigating the possibility of introducing the Leaving Certificate Applied programme; this would be a welcome addition to the programmes currently available and would support students who have a preference for a programme with a strong practical and vocational emphasis

The quality of leadership for learning is good. An effective senior management team is in place with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Senior management has annually reviewed the school curriculum and adjusted provision where appropriate. Current first years are studying nine core and two optional subjects; second and third-year students were provided with broader subject choices upon entry. The board and senior management should review the rationale for maintaining such a high level of core subjects at junior cycle. An open subject choice system operates for students upon entry to fifth year and this provision is good practice. Commendably, the introduction of subject modules in TY has afforded students opportunities to experience new areas of learning prior to making decisions about subject choice for senior cycle.

Evidence of the boards' commitment to innovation and inclusion can be seen in the introduction of a special class, Rang Cara, for students of Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in the current school year and in the incorporation of a Wellbeing class for students in all junior cycle classes.

A significant majority of staff in the school are involved in the College for Every Student (CFES) initiative. Students receive mentoring and additional supports from second year to promote progression to further education. The school has well-established links with local universities through the Trinity Access Programme (TAP), access routes for students via programmes in DCU as well as connections with local businesses through the Business in the Community network. The impact of these initiatives on student outcomes can be noted in the positive trends in student progression to further education and training in recent years.

Planning for learning support is undertaken by the special educational needs (SEN) coordinator; a large group of teachers also provide learning support to students. It is very good practice that senior management consider timetabling for learning support during the creation of the whole-school timetable. However, care should be taken to ensure that provision is sufficiently aligned with the individual identified needs of the students. Currently students receive support through withdrawal from Irish lessons or non-exam subjects such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE), and Pastoral Care. Due to the rotation of the TY modules deployment of teachers alternates between these and learning support; this is less than optimal provision. The school should consider additional methods of delivering learning support such as team teaching and in-class support.

The school receives a large allocation of hours to support SEN students. Currently, a significant amount of these hours have not been allocated. As a matter of priority, the overall SEN allocation should be reviewed to ensure appropriate use and compliance with relevant Department of Education and Skills guidelines and regulations.

The timetabling allocation for each subject is in line with syllabus and specification guidelines. SPHE is provided in junior cycle and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided to senior cycle students in line with curricular requirements. Almost all students are timetabled for a double period of PE. However a small minority of students studying LCVP have no access to PE. Senior management should ensure all students are timetabled for a minimum of a double period of PE for the full school year.

Provision for guidance is satisfactory. The guidance counsellor provides advice through individual appointments for students from first to sixth year. Currently, guidance lessons are not timetabled for any students. This should be reviewed with a view to scheduling guidance modules, particularly in senior cycle. The Guidance counsellor delivers the first-year Wellbeing programme to all first years; it is good practice that students have access to the Guidance counsellor on a regular basis.

DEIS supports for students are very good in the school. The School Completion Programme provides lunch, a breakfast club, a life skills coach, a homework club and an attendance tracker. Attendance at the breakfast and homework clubs has been increasing. The school has engaged in some research around the link between attendance and attainment as attendance is one of the key pillars of DEIS planning. It would be worthwhile for the school to consider how these very good strategies around improving attendance might best be used to increase whole-school attendance.

The work of the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator provides essential support to students who are at risk of non-attendance and leaving school early. The school provides courses in a range of areas of interest to parents.

Managing the organisation

The board of management, appointed in 2017, is working effectively. The board is appropriately constituted, and all members have engaged in training to support their role. Board members are very committed to the school and bring a commendable level of shared expertise to their roles and responsibilities.

All statutory policies are in place. However some of the policies have not been reviewed recently. At the time of the evaluation the board had identified a number of policies that require review. An anti-bullying policy is in place and a report on bullying incidents is made to the board at each meeting. However, the annual review of the anti-bullying policy has not taken place in recent years.

In the context of the school's inclusive culture some elements of the current admissions policy may suggest a conditionality regarding admission. These elements should be reconsidered in light of the school's inclusive practice, as part of a review of the overall admissions policy. To assist the board in managing the review of school policies, it is advised that a more systematic approach to policy development and review be established.

The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, students and the teacher education institution.

In line with the school's recent status as a participant in DEIS, it is timely that important work on the DEIS school plan is currently under development. It is recommended that, once approved, the board take an oversight role in monitoring the DEIS plan. To assist the Board to discharge this duty, elements of the DEIS plan should be discussed and reviewed regularly at board meetings.

Staff and parents both reported high levels of satisfaction with levels of communication in the school. In line with good practice, an agreed report is communicated to the teaching staff and a verbal report is given to the Parents' Association following all Board meetings.

The senior management team has made commendable efforts to establish mutually beneficial links with local educational agencies to maximise the use of and improve school facilities. A comprehensive Health and Safety statement has been developed; however, during the evaluation some health and safety matters in practical teaching rooms were brought to the attention of management. The board, in conjunction with senior management, should oversee the compliance with health and safety requirements at the start of each school year and on an ongoing basis.

Leading school development

The leadership of school development is good. The board has identified key priorities for future development and provides strategic leadership in this regard. Areas identified include: regeneration, increasing enrolment, and school maintenance. The members of the board are well informed and are thorough in their oversight role regarding financial management, child protection and school improvement.

School management has a clear vision centred on strengthening the profile of the school and on students reaching their potential. The principal plays an essential role in ensuring that the school is a calm and respectful place to work and learn. Collaboration has begun on the first phase of DEIS planning and the plan is emerging as a valuable framework to guide the school on improving outcomes for students in key areas. This should be progressed as a matter of priority.

The parents' association (PA) supports school initiatives very well; recent work included involvement in the 50th Jubilee celebrations. There are good links between the PA and senior management and findings from the parents' surveys are very positive and indicate that they feel very welcome in the school. Responses from parent surveys also indicated a willingness to receive more information on the work of the PA. It would be worthwhile for the parents' association to consider how it could keep the wider parent body more informed about their work.

Developing leadership capacity

Leadership is distributed very effectively amongst a middle management team comprising of eight post holders and a programme coordinator. A very worthwhile and well-considered review of the post structure in the school has recently been completed that will meet the current and future needs of the school.

Senior management works effectively to provide opportunities for leadership development. Leadership is distributed very effectively through consultation committees in a range of development areas linked to the DEIS plan. The current review and development of the DEIS plan provides an example of a whole-school decision-making process that was highly effective. Staff made a valuable contribution to this process and, in turn, were appreciative of having their views sought and respected.

Students are given leadership opportunities through the student council and as mentors for first years through the Della friends programme. Student responses to questionnaires distributed during the evaluation indicated limitations in the extent to which students felt they had a voice in the school. This should be explored by the school management, staff and students to further incorporate student voice in the operation of the school.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons observed was good, with some elements of very effective practice observed.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Students noted very high levels of satisfaction in their relationship with their teachers and this was borne out in the student focus group meeting, responses to student surveys and observations during lessons. Students were comfortable asking questions and contributing during lessons.

In the very good lessons students were active participants in their own learning. Students investigated, examined and questioned material and teachers used a range of methodologies to provide a stimulating environment. Students had opportunities to develop skills for lifelong learning in these lessons.

In some lessons students' enjoyment in learning was not always evident. Notwithstanding the positive relationships that were noted above, a significant minority of students surveyed felt they were not getting on well with their school work or find their lessons interesting.

In less than half of the lessons observed, students were provided with opportunities to work collaboratively and this strategy supported greater active engagement. Students had a clear understanding of the work they were undertaking and teachers were able to support individuals as required. It would be worthwhile for the school to examine how they can best use this collaborative strategy to support greater engagement in learning.

Due to the school's inclusive nature, learners present with a range of need within lessons and accordingly, teachers are required to differentiate learning opportunities. Teachers are aware of the wide ranging needs in the classes and know their students well. The school has previously engaged in CPD in the area of differentiation; there is scope to explore how a greater balance between support and challenge can be achieved within lessons. It is very good practice that senior management made provision for whole-school CPD in relation to teaching students with ASD. However in lessons observed where students with ASD were included, no additional measures to support these students were evident and this should be addressed.

Very good personalised, individual formative feedback was given to students in some lessons. In a small number of lessons, success criteria was provided to facilitate peer assessment and student self-reflection and this strategy worked very well. The value of sharing success criteria with students should be explored as a mechanism to support student assessment.

Digital learning technology, such as video clips and electronic presentations, was used to good effect in some lessons. There was scope for greater use of ICT and for the students themselves to use it further as a learning tool. As the school develops its Digital Learning Framework, it is worth considering how ICT can be used to greater effect as a learning and an assessment tool in every classroom.

In lessons for students who have been identified as having SEN, grouping of students is constrained by the timetable. Subject teachers are assigned to these lessons and in general are providing a programme of learning based on their subject specialism. Hence, provision was not sufficiently aligned with the individual identified needs of the students. Senior management are aware of the need to develop capacity across the staff in the area of SEN and are actively encouraging teachers to upskill in this area.

Student behaviour during the evaluation was found to be exemplary and respectful at all times. However, student survey responses indicated that a significant minority of students did not feel all

students were treated fairly and respectfully. The school should investigate this observation further. The planned review of the code of behaviour has the potential to reflect the very good behaviour evident in the school at the time of the evaluation.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

In the majority of lessons, teachers used questioning effectively for the purposes of recapitulation and assessment. Teachers distributed their questions evenly across the student cohort. However in a minority of lessons it was noted that boys were more likely to be asked a question. In these lessons greater passivity was noted in the girls' engagement with learning. As part of a whole-school approach to the use of effective questioning strategies, consideration should be given to any unintended gender bias in questioning.

Collaborative teaching is becoming established in the school and this has very good potential to support a range of students with SEN effectively within lessons. However, the effectiveness of this strategy has not been fully realised yet. Two such lessons were observed during the course of the evaluation; there was scope for improved co-planning in both lessons. Whole-school consideration should be given to the potential of carefully planned co-operative teaching to provide targeted supports for students in lessons and how this strategy could be used to enable students to learn effectively.

Lesson observation in language lessons indicated that English was the predominant language of instruction. Language departments should agree an approach to the judicious use of the target language in lessons. This approach should seek to incrementally build the use of the target language from first year to completion of the Leaving Certificate programme. Planning, both long and short term, for language lessons should seek to integrate all language skills.

Good planning was evident in the majority of lessons and teachers had prepared a range of appropriate materials and resources. In the most effective lessons, time was allowed for deeper interrogation of the learning and teachers used higher order questions and allowed sufficient time for students to evaluate, predict and reflect on their learning. The pace in other lessons did not allow students to apply knowledge as thoughtfully. Teachers, when planning lessons, should create sufficient time to enable students to engage and persist with increasingly challenging concepts.

Subject planning is well established in the school and formal subject department meetings occur. It is appropriate that planning is moving from a paper-based to an online system so as to allow for more efficient sharing of resources and updating of schemes.

Student attainment in certificate examinations is analysed by subject departments and records are kept of this analysis. However, a consequent level of reflection and action planning for improvement based on this analysis was not evident. Subject departments should be encouraged to set targets and develop action plans to support improvements in student outcomes. A more comprehensive and systematic student tracking system needs to be established by senior management that involves year heads and subject departments collaborating to ensure that students achieve their potential.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Subject inspections in a number of subjects have been conducted in the school in recent years. There is good implementation of recommendations made in previous inspections.

Leadership and Management

There has been good implementation of recommendations made in previous evaluations in the area of leadership and management. For instance, History is now included in the TY programme. The school has developed guidelines to support the induction of student teachers.

Teaching and Learning

Some good progress has been made in implementing recommendations regarding teaching and learning. In the Science lessons observed it was evident that active methodologies had been adopted as standard classroom practice. However, there is still scope to develop more variation of questioning strategies in other lessons. The recommendation from the Gaeilge inspection regarding the greater promotion of oral Irish has not been inadequately addressed.

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

The school demonstrates a very good capacity for school improvement; the process of planning for DEIS is underway and requires some further attention in the areas of target setting and action planning.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school community has engaged appropriately with the SSE process and has begun the first cycle of DEIS planning. The establishment of school committees to support the development of each of the aspects of the DEIS plan indicates a focussed approach to the process of school self-evaluation. Targets have been identified in each of the areas and staff are working to identify actions to meet these targets. Some of the targets outlined in the DEIS plan merit further development; targets should relate to baseline data with clearly identified actions to support them and they should focus on achieving improvement in student outcomes.

In order to progress the use of the SSE process to inform DEIS planning, the board should be encouraged to take a greater oversight role in the monitoring of the agreed targets. A summary of the School Improvement Plan should now be shared with the school community.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has very good capacity for improvement; the stabilisation of the management team in recent years has provided the necessary stewardship and direction that the school community requires. The upcoming appointment of a member of the middle management team to oversee the SSE and DEIS planning process in the school will provide further support to this process. It was evident during the evaluation that there is a desire, at all levels, to work to ensure positive student outcomes, and senior management has the capacity to lead this improvement using a whole-school approach.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school community of Ardscoil La Salle welcomes the WSEMLLPP (17-12-2018) of the Department of Education and Skills. It affirms the good work of the school in the areas of Leadership and Management and Teaching and Learning. It provides a road map for its planning and future development and improvement which will feed into the school's own strategic plan which has a focus of regeneration for all facets of the school.

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 school has already commenced work on the further deployment of resources for students with special educational needs. Through engagement with the NCSE we are receiving whole school support in implementing the continuum of support for post-primary schools.

As acknowledged in the report, the school has only become part of DEIS since September 2017 and it is in the process of aligning its strategic planning with the requirements of DEIS. It is our intention to include a DEIS report on each Board meeting agenda and to exercise our oversight role with regard to the setting of targets in the light of the analysis of student outcomes.

Sharing of best practice in 'highly effective teaching strategies' currently in use in the school is part of our continuous professional development programme for staff for the coming year.

At subject department level, it is planned to use all the available data trends to set targets and develop action plans to support improvements in that regard.

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;