

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	De La Salle College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Upper Churchtown Road Churchtown Dublin 14
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60310E

Date of Evaluation: 16-01-2019



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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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, 15,16-01-2019
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

De La Salle College is a voluntary secondary school with 348 students. It is under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Leadership of learning and teaching in De La Salle College is of a high quality overall; there is scope for development in relation to student attainment and optimising provision for students with additional education needs.
- Leadership of school development and the building of leadership capacity are highly effective; there is a clear vision for the future of the school which is reflected in the forward planning process in progress.
- The overall quality of learning and teaching is good; however, some of the progressive learning and teaching strategies being promoted in the school have not yet been integrated across all classroom practice.
- There is scope for further development in the implementation of recommendations from previous inspections.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) is actively promoted and an assistant principal has been appointed as SSE co-ordinator; the application of the six-stage process however, is not yet embedded into all teachers' practice.
- De La Salle College has very good capacity for ongoing school improvement.

Recommendations

- As leaders of learning, assistant principals should progress the proposed tracking and monitoring of student progress and implement the initiative in tandem with the student progress template as part of the school's improved attainment agenda.
- School management and the members of the learning support department should review the provision for students with additional education needs to ensure full compliance with Departmental guidelines.
- All teachers should use the SSE process to ensure that active methodologies, differentiation and formative assessment become embedded into classroom practice.
- The board and senior management should consider developing follow-through initiatives that will support the dissemination and implementation of recommendations from subject inspections.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

Leadership of learning and teaching is of a high quality in De La Salle College. The board of management is proactive in its endeavours to ensure good oversight of learning and teaching. In addition to the principal's reports given at meetings, members of the board discuss the outcomes of inspection reports, the analysis of student outcomes in state examinations and proposed curricular reforms. The board has also instigated initiatives in recent years to bring about required improvements to aspects of learning and teaching. These are very good practices.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum intended to meet the needs of the diverse cohort of students. Current improvements to curricular provision include the proposed introduction of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

The senior management team has identified a number of key areas for development in order to progress the school improvement agenda in relation to learning and teaching. Whole-school professional development has been facilitated through ongoing work with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). A number of teachers have also undertaken further professional training for the purpose of encouraging a growth mind-set in students. The learning arising from this in-service is disseminated to the general body of staff.

As part of the school's endeavour to increase student enrolment, the new senior management team has identified the raising of academic standards as a key priority. This is welcomed as an examination of outcomes in the certificate examinations indicates the need for ongoing vigilance regarding both the uptake of levels and student attainment. Assistant principals (APs), have undertaken responsibility for the creation and implementation of a tracking system to monitor students' academic progress and to ensure that all students reach their full potential in line with their aptitudes and interests. This is very good practice in promoting the work of APs as leaders of learning.

However, while the tracking and monitoring system for the purpose of progressing student attainment is still work in progress, a template in the student journal for recording the outcomes of regular assessments and encouraging student reflection on their progress is under-utilised. Students should be actively encouraged to use this template to keep themselves motivated and informed of their progress in a systematic way. This student tracking system should in time serve to complement the initiative currently being developed by APs.

There is a strong ethos of care for the students and this is reflected in the level of supports made available through the work of the care team comprising senior management, the guidance service, the learning support and resource department. The guidance service works primarily with senior cycle students through timetabled lessons and the provision of individual careers and personal counselling. Greater attention to the manner in which students and their parents are supported when making subject choices is recommended, in light of the findings of the student and parent questionnaires. Access to guidance is now facilitated at junior cycle through a new initiative of vocational preparation and guidance, intended to support student wellbeing. This is good practice.

The high level of teacher commitment to student welfare and wellbeing is evident in the tutor system, where many teachers volunteer to take registration time with their tutor group each morning prior to the beginning of the school day. Teachers also contribute significant time to the provision of after-school curricular supports and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Students who met with the inspectors praised the very good teacher student relationships and supports offered to them.

There is a highly committed and well qualified learning support team in place to provide for students with additional education needs (AEN). The school has a significant resource allocation which has been used to date to support students through small group withdrawal. The main focus of these groups is on improving literacy and numeracy. Team teaching has been introduced, but is not as yet sufficiently developed to support students with additional needs within the classroom setting. Individualised student support files have been developed to meet the assessed needs of students in receipt of additional support. However, there is scope for further development in evaluating the impact of provision on student progress. Separate provision is made for students requiring support in English as an additional language (EAL).

There was evidence to indicate that the current deployment of the resource for students with additional needs requires review in some instances. A number of the withdrawal groups include students who do not have identified learning needs, but who are exempt from Irish. The purpose of the withdrawal group is to provide focused interventions to meet the needs of students with identified learning needs. Where these needs are diverse in nature, students should be further grouped in accordance with similarity of needs and the relevant personnel deployed to support them. The presence of students who do not have identified learning needs can thus detract from the overall purpose and benefit of these withdrawal groups.

Some of the school's resource allocation is currently being used to maintain the broad range of curricular subjects and small classes deemed to support students with additional educational needs. This is a legacy issue which senior management is currently endeavouring to address through contact with the National Council for Special Education and seeking advice from senior management colleagues in other schools.

Senior management and the learning support department should address these issues through a review of their overall planning and practice to ensure that it is in line with Departmental Circular 0014/2017 and reflects the continuum of support promoted by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

Managing the organisation

The day-to-day management of the school is highly effective. The recently appointed principal and deputy principal are a united team with complementary skills and they maintain a visible presence in the school to support and motivate both staff and students. They meet daily to discuss the day-to-day running of the school, but have also allocated time each week to plan for the future direction of the school. This is very good practice.

The board of management is properly constituted and its members have a keen awareness of their roles and responsibilities. The board attributes great importance to promoting the Lasallian ethos of the school both in terms of its day-to-day organisation and the future vision for the school. They meet regularly and work very effectively to maintain good oversight of all that is happening in the school.

Recent appointments to posts of responsibility have facilitated an in-depth review of post-holder duties regarding middle leadership and management. Assistant principals carry out a range of pastoral and administrative or co-ordination duties that reflect their leadership and management roles and which contribute to the effective day-to-day management of the school.

Good communication systems and practices support the effective management of staff and students. Senior management keep staff updated on all that is happening in the school through email and are also available to meet staff as required. Staff meetings have been restructured to facilitate a shared approach to the school improvement agenda through open discussion of topics which go beyond organisational issues. Computerised systems have been introduced to share and record student-related information as appropriate and there is a texting system in place to inform parents of school matters in a timely manner. The school website, a valuable medium of communication with the wider school and local community is however, under-utilised and this should be addressed in order to raise the profile of the school in the community and beyond.

The code of behaviour has recently been revised to reflect a more positive approach to the management of students. A merit system has been established and incidents of positive behaviour and attitudes are recorded in students' journals. There is a ladder of referral for breaches of the code of behaviour. Exemplary student behaviour was noted throughout the course of the evaluation.

Leading school development

The board and senior management share a clear vision for the future of the school and of the direction needed to bring this vision to full fruition.

The board oversees school policy and instigates the development or review of policies as required. The work is carried out at either senior management or staff committee level and then presented to the parent and student bodies as appropriate. An examination of school policies indicates a need to review the admissions policy and procedures for enrolment. The current practice of charging students for sitting the obligatory entrance assessment should cease and should be deleted from the admissions policy. Given the school's desire to increase student enrolment and in light of the current use of the resource allocation to support smaller class sizes, a review of student intake and class size merits discussion at board level.

The school is engaging with the School Self Evaluation (SSE) process. Literacy initiatives include the use of the accelerated reading programme to support and advance competence and positive attitudes towards reading. The quality and implementation of keyword strategies varied across lessons, ranging from high levels of literacy, well embedded into the body of the lesson, to explanation of subject specific vocabulary without appropriate follow through. However, there was limited attention to the promotion of numeracy in its broader context of problem solving, timelines, cause and effect and pattern recognition.

Developing leadership capacity

Senior management work very effectively to afford all members of staff opportunities to develop leadership capacity. Members of the in-school management team have been facilitated to attend leadership development courses organised by the trustee body. Teachers are also supported through the De La Salle professional networks. The teachers who have engaged in the initiative to promote a growth mind-set among students have also been afforded the opportunity to disseminate their learning at in-school CPD events and at staff meetings.

As a newly appointed senior management team, both the principal and deputy principal have, to date, attended all meetings of the care team and other working groups. It is now perhaps timely for them to apportion lead responsibility for different areas of work in accordance with their complementary skills in order to optimise their heavy work schedules. The practice of recording minutes within working groups and forwarding them to senior management should also be encouraged, thereby promoting responsibility and accountability in a meaningful way.

Student leadership is meaningfully promoted through a range of opportunities afforded to them. The student council is active in promoting the student voice regarding whole-school issues. The new initiative of holding clinics where all students can approach the members of the student council regarding issues of concern is tribute to the students' initiative and their awareness of the importance of listening to all. A valuable student mentoring programme is in place where fifth-year students support the incoming first-year students. A prefect system allows for sixth-year students to contribute purposefully to the overall management of students.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. Twenty-four lessons were observed across a range of subjects at both junior and senior cycle. There was, however, evidence that the full range of teaching and learning strategies being promoted as part of the school improvement agenda has not as yet become embedded into all classroom practice.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Relationships and interactions among students and between students and teachers supported a co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment in all of the lessons observed. The majority of students actively engaged in class discussions, listened respectfully to their classmates and asked questions which advanced learning. However, there were some lessons where students did not fully engage with the activities selected by the teacher and their voice was not heard. There were also some instances where student tasks were insufficiently challenging. When planning lessons and homework, teachers should include appropriately differentiated activities to optimise student participation and attainment.

In the majority of lessons, students were afforded opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively and they completed the assigned tasks in a purposeful manner. However, they reported that they would like more opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers. To this end, teachers should further develop and incorporate the practice of peer collaboration and assessment into lessons and, in this way, promote some of the strategies central to the school's improvement agenda.

In highly effective lessons, students made meaningful connections between school-based learning and real life. Their contributions were insightful and they demonstrated very good capacity for higher-order thinking. It was noted however, that some of these students were planning to take ordinary level in the relevant certificate examination. This merits review to ensure that students are challenged to take the level in the certificate examinations most appropriate to their ability and potential.

Where learning outcomes were most successful, teachers integrated very effective assessment and reflection practices into the lesson structure. This enabled teachers to identify and provide individual students with additional in-class support as appropriate. These assessment strategies also allowed students to recognise and acknowledge their own strengths and areas for development. There were some lessons where very limited or no formative assessment strategies were observed. In order to

enhance student learning, all teachers should progress in-class assessment strategies and provide written developmental formative feedback on homework assignments.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The majority of teachers established clear learning intentions at the beginning of lessons. However, in a significant number of instances, these learning intentions were not incremental, developmental or suitably differentiated. Teachers are encouraged to plan a series of learning intentions, staged in complexity, to cater for the learning needs of all students in the group. Teachers should also share success criteria with students and provide opportunities for them to engage in peer and self-assessment.

All teachers were well prepared for lessons and many modelled enthusiasm for their subject. Effective teacher instruction was evident in most lessons, with a good balance between teacher and student input. In a small number of instances, however, learning would have been more productive if teachers had managed the instructional phase in a way that optimised student participation and response.

Some teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to support learning; nevertheless the use of ICT remains an area for teachers to further develop as part of the school's digital strategy. In practical subjects, the very good attention to health and safety procedures is commended.

While teachers generally used a good range of questioning strategies, there was scope for improvement in some instances to promote deeper engagement with the lesson content and to extend learning.

Many teachers have attended relevant in-service training for the new junior cycle and value working with their colleagues as a way of improving their own professional development. The school's new online drive is supporting good collaborative practices, both in terms of subject department planning and uploading useful teaching and learning resources. Some subject departments operate a common assessment strategy and mark papers for their colleagues so students benefit from another teacher's independent view of their work. This is commended. Teachers should ensure that all subject plans include differentiation and formative assessment strategies to support the diverse abilities of the student cohort.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

There is scope for further development in the implementation of recommendations from previous inspections. Three subject inspections and a programme evaluation have been carried out since the original whole school evaluation. The areas for development focused primarily on teaching and learning and included recommendations regarding the uptake of levels as part of the student attainment agenda, formative assessment as part of the overall assessment for and of learning and the consolidation and recording of learning.

Leadership and Management

While there were no specific recommendations in relation to leadership and management, it is incumbent on the board and senior management team to maintain oversight of the implementation of recommendations. To this end, the board should consider the development of a follow-through initiative where, a certain period of time after an inspection, a subject department could be asked for a report on its progress in implementing the recommendations. Senior management should also

ensure that the findings and recommendations arising from a subject inspection are disseminated to all teachers, in order that they too might benefit from the experience.

Teaching and Learning

While recommendations arising from previous inspections have been implemented in some instances, the embedding of improvement across all subjects is still work in progress. The practice of recording homework in student journals is not widespread. Furthermore, an examination of student copybooks indicated that opportunities to consolidate learning through the provision and correction of homework are limited in many instances. All teachers should ensure that these assessment practices which, in time, should support improvement in student attainment become an integral part of classroom practice.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school has embraced the SSE process, adopting the various themes as required. The appointment of an assistant principal as SSE co-ordinator reflects the school's commitment to the process and its further development.

However, there is scope for development in teacher use of the six stages of the SSE process to bring about improvement in learning and teaching. A number of strategies have been introduced to support more active learning and there was evidence of their successful implementation in some of the lessons visited. However, there was also evidence to indicate that some teachers were not implementing these approaches, while in other instances variations in approach did not support an effective evaluation of the initiatives being promoted. A more systematic approach, where new initiatives are piloted consistently across subjects and classes and evaluated after a set period of time, is recommended. This should be carried out within the context of a whole school review of the SSE process and the manner in which data is gathered and initiatives are chosen, progressed and evaluated.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has lived through a period of significant change in recent years. A new senior management team has been appointed. Post-holders no longer carry out finite administrative tasks; rather, they have been allocated significant duties within their newly defined roles as leaders of learning. The general body of teachers demonstrate strong commitment to their students through their engagement with new CPD initiatives and their involvement in after school supports and co-curricular activities. There is a clear vision for the future of the school as an inclusive learning community promoting the ethos and values of the Lasallian tradition. This indicates the school's very great capacity for ongoing improvement and augurs well for the future of the school.

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;