

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Joseph's Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Convent Lane Rush County Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60343T

Date of Evaluation: 14-03-2018



**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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	14-03-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with board of management• Meetings with principal and deputy principals• 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

Saint Joseph's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education: An Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate programme. Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) at Junior Cycle are being introduced for students where appropriate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- School leadership and management are of a very high standard and leadership is well distributed across a large staff cohort who engage with numerous initiatives; however, when surveyed, a significant minority of teachers, perceived that their views are not valued in decision-making.
- Very high-quality care is provided to students and provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) is good overall; however, SEN support is predominantly provided in one-to-one or small group withdrawal lessons and there is scope to support students further within whole-group lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good: this ranged from very good teaching in a significant minority of lessons to satisfactory practice in a small number of lessons.
- Good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations.
- Overall, the school has very good capacity to manage and implement future improvement through its very effective school self-evaluation (SSE) and DEIS planning processes and through consolidation of the many initiatives that support improvement.

Recommendations

- Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the views of all teachers are further included in the decision-making processes in the school.
- The *continuum of support* framework should inform more inclusive approaches to planning provision for students with SEN, as appropriate.
- While observed in some instances, all teachers should ensure that lessons are consistently student-centred, differentiated and that they promote active learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

School leadership and management are of a very high standard.

Leading learning and teaching

The senior management team is highly committed to developing all aspects of school life. The principal and two deputy principals have been highly effective in supporting improvements in attainment and progression to third level. Teachers are deployed in line with their qualifications, and timetabling is appropriate to subject and programme specifications. It is a very good development that Politics and Society has been introduced recently and that Computer Science will be available as a subject choice from September 2018.

Both the board of management and the senior management team are highly supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) for staff. A wide range of learning opportunities has been provided including the post-graduate diploma in 21st Century Teaching and Learning which has been completed by a third of teachers in the school.

The board of management ensures that a broad and balanced curriculum is available to students. In addition to this, staff provide rich and varied learning experiences in the classroom and beyond. The board demonstrated commitment to, and good awareness of, developments in teaching and learning.

It is very good practice that students are offered a sampling programme in first year to experience the range of subjects available and to enable them to make better informed choices. A good range of choices is available to students, including a range of modern languages.

Staff meetings are used effectively for strategic planning and for developing the school as a learning community. It is commendable that the agenda is focussed largely on teaching and learning. Teachers are given opportunities to share good classroom practice and new knowledge and skills to build capacity.

The TY programme provides a wide variety of modules in addition to the core subjects offered. It is very good practice that students are encouraged to reflect on their TY experiences and to provide feedback to teachers which informs future planning.

Very good student-support structures are in place. Senior management works closely with the student-support team to provide an individualised response to support needs as they arise. Weekly meetings of the team are held. The team communicates effectively with relevant staff and liaises with external agencies as required. An effective ladder of referral is in place to support students, form tutors and year heads play an integral role in this process. In addition, support is provided through the mentoring systems in place; anchor teachers support students requiring higher-level support.

The home-school-community-liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator works very effectively with parents and guardians. Parenting training and other self-development initiatives, to encourage parents to engage positively with the school and to support the students, are provided. Parents who avail of these services value them highly. Currently, the parents' association (PA) is in a transitional phase and requires development; focus should now be given to developing the positive links with parents to reinvigorate the PA.

A full-time guidance counsellor provides high-quality support to students. Students are supported to make choices appropriate to their future study and career needs through guidance lessons and individual supports. Individual appointments for personal counselling are also provided, where necessary.

Support for students with SEN is good. The school has a very inclusive ethos. A highly committed co-ordinator leads a core SEN team. Good initial identification strategies are in place, including very good liaison with primary schools and analysis of standardised assessment scores. Tracking of outcomes for students with SEN is under review. However, management of SEN requires improvement in some areas. Support to students is provided predominantly through withdrawal on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Additional modes of provision, such as team teaching, should be included so that, where possible, learners' needs are met in a more inclusive manner in line with the *continuum of support* framework.

Managing the organisation

The overall quality of school management is very good. The board has developed a range of policies that support the effective running of the school. A number of policies are scheduled for review. It is timely that the code of behaviour is due to be reviewed as it is not currently reflective of the positive measures in place to support behaviour such as the reward systems, and the 'check and connect' mentoring approach. It is very positive that the school is developing restorative practices as a component of positive behaviour management.

The principal and deputy principals work very effectively together, they share a common vision and contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school. They have clearly defined roles and their individual leadership styles are complementary. They meet regularly throughout the week and they are engaged actively in many of the team meetings that take place in the school.

The admissions policy allows for inclusive enrolment. The school has developed very good links with local primary schools. Teachers visit feeder schools to meet incoming first-year students and TY students engage with sixth-class students to support them with their transition to post-primary school. The school liaises pro-actively with external agencies and maintains very positive links with the local community.

The development of a new school premises has been a key focus of the board's work in recent years. While the school community awaits the new school development, the existing school building has been maintained well and meets the needs of the current enrolment adequately. The school has a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Teachers, students and parents spoke favourably of the sense of community within the school.

An online administration platform has been introduced and is used effectively by teachers to share information about students' needs. The school is also beginning to use information communications technology (ICT) to track student learning. Subject departments are required to analyse examination results using a common template and to identify specific actions for improvement. The subject department folders showed inconsistent use of this template. Greater consistency in action-planning for improved outcomes, together with further development of academic tracking will support the school's drive for ongoing improvements in attainment and progression.

Leading school development

Good leadership for school development is shown by the board, senior management and staff alike. This is demonstrated, for example, in the expansion of the school's ICT infrastructure and support for the schools' digital strategy, and the introduction of coding and computer studies. An electronic learning management system allows teachers to create, manage, and share content and resources with students.

Lessons are now of one-hour duration to support greater active engagement in lessons. A number of initiatives are in place to promote positive outcomes for learners, not least the school's involvement with the *College for Every Student* (CFES) initiative. The school has fostered links successfully with third level providers.

Developing leadership capacity

The management team employs very good mechanisms for encouraging teachers to realise their leadership potential through supporting initiatives to develop teaching and learning. However, some overlap across initiatives is evident. Consideration should be given to further streamlining the work of the various teams to ensure that strategies arising from initiatives are aligned and readily implementable by all teachers. Senior management engages actively in CPD that meets its own leadership development needs.

Many teachers have voluntarily taken on additional or extended roles across the school. However, teacher questionnaires highlighted that a significant minority of teachers believe their views are not valued in decision making. Processes for consulting with staff should be reviewed to support whole-school adoption of the developments for effective teaching and support for students.

The leadership capacity of students is developed effectively through a range of initiatives, especially through the student voice and student leadership groups in place. While students were observed to be generally very articulate and able to express themselves, just over half of students surveyed perceived that they do not have a say in how things are done in the school. The board has identified a need to improve consultation mechanisms between school management and students; this should be a priority for development.

Several other very effective student-leadership opportunities include involvement with the Erasmus programme, community projects including the Uganda Project and working with the St. Vincent de Paul. Students are trained in TY to become peer-mentors to primary-school pupils. The buddy system and the student leadership team facilitate student leadership effectively. Debating and involvement in the range of extra-curricular activities also offer students scope to develop leadership skills.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good: this ranged from very good teaching in a significant minority of lessons to satisfactory practice in a small number of lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In most lessons, the students demonstrated motivation to learn. Student behaviour was generally very good. In the majority of lessons, students were provided with opportunities for collaborative work and they worked very well together.

In very effective lessons, active learning methodologies were used to promote student engagement and to develop deeper thinking about concepts and topics. These lessons were characterised by sufficient balance between the teacher and student voice also.

Very good use of ICT was evident in the most successful lessons. In more than half of the lessons, students used ICT to present information and to give feedback. ICT in the form of visuals, video clips and electronic presentations was also used to support learning.

In language lessons, a range of methodologies was observed to be used effectively. However, in the majority of these lessons there was scope for greater use of the target language to be used by both the teacher and the students.

The quality of students' written work varied and there was scope to develop the monitoring of copies and notebooks. Some constructive formative feedback was noted and this practice should be extended and developed as an effective support for learning and assessment, and to increase the level of expectation for students' written work.

In lessons with effective differentiation, a variety of methodologies was evident and criteria for success were tailored to all learners. In the majority of lessons observed, there was scope to plan more carefully for the range of learning needs within classes through greater differentiation of instruction and activities. Extension activities, more scaffolding strategies and a balance of lower and higher-order questions would support students who require variation in their learning.

A very good range of extra-curricular activities is in place to provide breadth to the overall school experience. Homework groups operate and take-up is high, particularly amongst students with additional needs and students preparing for examinations.

Assessment practices varied from effective, in the majority of lessons, to satisfactory in other lessons. In one very effective lesson, students appraised their experience of provision using an online survey. In other effective or very effective lessons, the assessment strategies used enabled students to reflect on their understanding of content or concepts covered. However, these approaches were not universal and assessment practices would benefit from a whole-school review.

Students demonstrated confidence in discussing their views with the inspection team. They conveyed strong satisfaction with the school and cited many positive elements from their individual and collective experience.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The quality of teachers' individual practice was good overall and some very good practice was also noted. In a small number of lessons, practice was satisfactory. A good variety of methodologies was used in almost all lessons. ICT featured in the majority of lessons to a greater or lesser extent.

In over half of the lessons, a virtual learning environment was observed to be used to good effect to support students' learning. Research carried out in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin shows that the teachers in the school are positively disposed to using technology. However, there was scope in some lessons to use ICT to further support active learning.

Student outcomes in the certificate examinations are monitored by subject departments. Very good practice was noted in some department plans where action planning to build on success was evident. This should become standard practice across subject departments.

Teachers' individual lesson planning was good, with some very good planning practice also noted as well as adequate planning a small number of lessons. Generally, lessons were well structured

although there was scope in a number of lessons to narrow the content so that topics and concepts could be explored in greater depth.

Teachers used questioning effectively as a means of assessing learning in the majority of lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers used a combination of higher and lower-order questions to consolidate and assess learning. There was scope in the majority of lessons to use more targeted questions to ensure that all students had opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

The positive impact of SSE planning was evident in the majority of lessons where learning objectives were clearly communicated, classroom walls included literacy and numeracy supports and a good range of strategies was used. These lessons included active learning methodologies, elements of group work and an emphasis on student-centred learning in contrast to the pre-dominantly teacher-led instruction in a small number of lessons.

A few teachers have initiated peer observation as a means of sharing good practice and to develop collaborative practices. This initiative is led currently by the leading learning team. Some co-operative teaching is also in place to support students with additional educational needs.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall, good progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations arising from previous subject inspections.

Leadership and Management

There has been good implementation of recommendations made in recent evaluations in the area of leadership and management. For instance, procedures are now in place for subject departments to analyse exam results to inform action plans for improvement. Additionally, senior management has taken responsibility for the whole-school implementation of teaching and learning recommendations.

Teaching and Learning

Previous inspections recommended the further development of differentiated strategies to cater for the wide range of student abilities, the implementation of a common approach for setting and grading homework, and strategies to support the acquisition of modern languages. Overall, there was good implementation of these recommendations noted. However, in some lessons observed, there was scope to develop these areas further.

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

The quality of the school's self-evaluation process and capacity for improvement is very good.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school has engaged pro-actively in self-evaluation through the SSE and DEIS planning processes. Baseline data has been used to good effect. Developments, such as the digital strategy, are supporting a range of teaching and learning initiatives currently. Surveys have been used to identify areas of strength within the school and areas for improvement. The SSE and DEIS planning processes have also supported junior-cycle developments, providing common understanding and consolidating the range of teaching and learning initiatives in place.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a very good capacity for improvement. It has seen many changes and developments over the past number of years including the significant growth in enrolment. The board strongly supports the school and the patron body provides valuable guidance. The work of senior management team is very effective, dynamic, and helps to promote a common vision. The teachers demonstrate great commitment to the school and the students. Parents are supportive of the school. A focus group of students affirmed the importance of school for them and the opportunities that they are given.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board appreciates the positive and affirming comments within the report which reflect well on leadership and management and teaching and learning in the school. The board notes the perception among a minority of teachers that their views are not valued in decision-making and has taken steps to address this issue. The board accepts the comments in the report regarding appropriate differentiation and scope to support students further within whole-group lessons.

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 plans to respond to the recommendations of the inspectors as follows:

Recommendation 1

- a) increase and spread the number of whole-school planning meetings through the use of Croke Park hours
- b) survey the teachers regarding the focus for SSE in 2018-2019
- c) encourage all teachers to participate and contribute to the teams developing school policies
- d) continue to invite teachers to present to their colleagues at whole-school planning meetings.

Recommendation 2 and 3

- a) SESS training in differentiation and team-teaching is scheduled to take place next term
- b) the board will continue to support whole-school and individual CPD in active learning methodologies
- c) teachers will continue to be encouraged to share best practice at whole-school planning meetings and subject department meetings
- d) the SSE planning system will continue to be used to ensure that lessons are consistently student-centred, differentiated and that they promote active learning.

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;