

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

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

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	St Raphaela's Secondary School
<b>School address</b>	Upper Kilmacud Road Stillorgan Co Dublin
<b>Roll number</b>	60361V

**Date of Evaluation: 16-12-2016**



## **WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?**

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

## **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	16-12-2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <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><li>• Meeting with parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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 the senior management team of principal and deputy principal, board of management and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Raphaela's Secondary School is a Catholic, voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The school was established in 1971 and its inclusive ethos is welcoming of students of all faiths. The spirit of foundress St Raphaela Mary is articulated through the school's mission statement which promotes a learning community that will flourish academically, spirituality and morally. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate to students. Currently there are 565 female students enrolled in the school.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The board of management provides good overall quality leadership for the school, though some activities such as strategic planning need attention.
- The quality of leadership and management from the highly committed senior management team is good; they effectively lead staff to provide a caring, welcoming and supportive learning environment for students.
- A key strength of the school is its effective pastoral care system and the commitment and dedication of staff to the operation of the school, though the organisation and workings of the special educational needs department merits review.
- The school community's engagement in school development planning and in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is satisfactory.
- Distributed leadership is facilitated through the posts of responsibility; there is inequity in some of the tasks assigned to post duties.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in most lessons, with some examples of highly effective practice observed; in a few lessons the quality ranged from satisfactory to fair.
- Currently, due to on-going industrial action, planning for and implementation of the revised Junior Cycle Framework is limited.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management should make arrangements to oversee the collaborative development of a strategic developmental plan that includes targeted actions identified through the SSE process.

- All posts should be reviewed by senior management and staff in consultation with the board to ensure that the current needs of the school are addressed and any inequality in tasks assigned are eliminated.
- The school's provision for students with additional needs should be benchmarked by senior management against best practice as set out in Circular 70/2014.
- To enhance student learning, the academic mentoring and tracking system should be further developed by teachers.
- In planning for continuing profession development (CPD) senior management should include teacher upskilling in learning support, differentiation techniques, co-operative learning methodologies and assessment strategies.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

#### 1.1. School ownership and management:

The board of management provides good overall quality leadership for the school, though some activities such as strategic planning need attention. The appropriately constituted, experienced and committed board of management promotes a spirit of partnership within the school community. Following each board meeting, agreed reports are issued to staff and the parents' association in line with best practice. At each board meeting, members are very well informed of school activities and issues by the comprehensive principal's report.

The board of management and the principal are aware of their statutory obligations and work to ensure that all legislative requirements are met. Currently, the data protection policy is in development. The board should formalise an attendance and participation strategy for the school in line with the Education Welfare Act. It is advised that the board initiates a systematic and rolling review of all school policies. Policies should be dated and include a timeframe for review.

The board's vision for the school includes the provision of good quality facilities, empowerment of staff as leaders and forging deeper links with the wider school community and past pupils. Many of the general objectives in the current ten year operational plan such as increasing enrolment are progressing well. As the current plan is nearing its conclusion, the board should now lead the collaborative development of a new over-arching strategic plan for the shared vision for the school, agreed by all partners. The plan, should include time-bound actions, evaluation procedures and the priorities which will guide the future development of the school.

The principal works very effectively with the board to create and maintain a learning organisation. There is potential for the board to further develop its role in relation to educational leadership. The board could consider inviting subject departments, programme coordinators and post-holders to prepare an annual report for outlining their achievements and targets for development.

The quality of leadership and management from the highly committed senior management team is good. The team's shared ownership of the management of the school is characterised by high levels of collaboration and respect of staff, parents and students. Both principal and deputy principal maintain a visible presence within the school and operate an open-door policy. Constructive

relationships are built and maintained through effective and regular communication with all school partners.

The senior management team is highly supported by post holders who constitute a middle management team. Year heads are drawn from both the assistant principals and the special duties posts of responsibility. Post holders make a significant contribution to the management of the school and care of students. However, there is an imbalance in tasks assigned to some posts in terms of time expended and level of responsibility. A review of all posts informed by Circular PPT 29/02 should be conducted by senior management and staff in consultation with the board to ensure that the current needs of the school are addressed and that there is a more equitable allocation of responsibilities.

Senior management values and supports partnership with parents as a means of supporting students' learning and wellbeing. Parental involvement in developing the school is satisfactory. The work of the school is supported by an active parents' association. There is good communication between senior management and the association. Members are consulted in relation to policy development and a partnership model is being further developed through parental participation in some of the school's committees. Parents interviewed and surveyed as part of this evaluation reported high levels of satisfaction with school management, the quality of pastoral care and the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

## 1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The senior management team works diligently and effectively with staff, students and parents to provide a caring, respectful and learning community. The principal and deputy principal assume individual responsibility for particular aspects of school management while working as a cohesive effective team in the leading the school community. Senior management's educational leadership is evident through their implementation of their *Growth Mindset* approach to learning which encourages students to be resilient learners. While senior management encourages and supports staff to avail of individual CPD, the provision of formal whole-school CPD requires development. Further progression of professional capacity in learning support, differentiation strategies, co-operative learning methodologies and assessment strategies to support the *Growth Mindset* concept and the new Junior Cycle should be considered for inclusion in future CPD plans.

There is good distributed leadership in the school through the post of responsibility structure, the class tutor system, management's support of teachers as leaders of initiatives and members of school-based committees. The principal creates and motivates staff teams and working groups to lead developments in key areas. Individual and collective staff contributions to school life are welcomed and highly valued by school management. Teachers have tangible input into the decision-making process.

The school is an open and inclusive school and is welcoming of all students. However, some aspects of the admissions policy may appear to be restrictive and do not accurately reflect the inclusive nature of the school. The requirement of information regarding the special educational needs of prospective applicants being submitted as early as fifth class should be re-considered in any future review. A good induction programme is delivered to first-year students. The guidance counsellor engages with all first-year students and students spoke highly of the student mentor scheme wherein sixth years are paired with small groups of first-year students for the duration of the year.

The school provides a range of curricular programmes and subjects. To broaden the range of curricular programmes and subject options available for students, further consideration could be given to the introduction of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and additional technology-based subjects. The TY programme is very well organised and co-ordinated. TY students are afforded opportunities to avail of a varied range of activities including sailing, fencing, mindfulness, and introduction to languages such as Japanese and Russian. Currently, due to on-going industrial action, planning for and implementation of the revised Junior Cycle Framework is limited.

It is highly valued by students and parents that almost all subjects on the junior cycle curriculum are sampled in first year. It is positive that students exempt from Irish at senior level are given the opportunity to study another subject for certification. Timetable provision is good for subjects with the exception of Physical Education (PE) for third years who only receive a single period lesson.

Some of the reviewed subject plans contained good and well-developed curriculum plans while others require further development. It is advisable that curriculum plans be used as working documents with noted reflections by teachers as topics are delivered.

Management and staff are commended for their provision of a broad range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities which help to foster students' holistic development by providing a variety of learning opportunities.

Designated hours allocated by the Department to support students in need of additional help are used for their intended purpose. Students with learning needs are supported through a withdrawal system for additional help in specific subjects and the creation of a small mathematics class in some year groups. A core team of teachers delivers learning support in two designated classrooms. While there is a strong commitment to supporting students, there is a need for a more systematic approach to deploying and recording the supports provided and to the tracking and evaluation of students' progress. It is recommended that team teaching be used to maximise and extend the use of resources, and that targeted literacy and numeracy programmes be also implemented, where appropriate. In addition, a template should be devised to record the learning objectives and activities of all students availing of resource and learning support so as to facilitate the tracking of their progress. The special educational needs policy should be adapted to describe the specific practices of the school and to ensure clarity and transparency in relation to the delivery of supports. The work of the learning support department should be informed by Circular 070/2014 and the 2014 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) publication *Student Support Teams in Schools*.

The principal encourages teachers to evaluate their practice and analyse students' outcomes in certificate examinations. It is advisable that subject departments reflect on student outcomes in certificate examinations having compared attainment to baseline assessment data available in the school. The newly introduced mentoring system which encourages and supports fifth-year students in setting attainment goals is praiseworthy. School management and staff should consider the further development of the mentoring system to track student attainment using data from primary school and results from school-based assessments which will further support students to become responsible and self-motivated learners.

The quality of care for students is very good. The code of behaviour is highly supportive of an enabling and respectful learning environment and includes a clear ladder of referral. The year head and tutor system is a valuable support to the management and care of students. The guidance service ensures the effective delivery of guidance to students through timetabled lessons, individual personal and careers counselling. The care team of year heads, guidance counsellor and learning support coordinator meets weekly to discuss and support student welfare, engagement and progress. The

school is commended for the range of targeted initiatives such as the *Shield my School* to counteract bullying, a mental health week, participation in initiatives such as the *Health Promoting Schools* (HPS) and the development of a wellbeing programme for students.

Good opportunities to further develop student leadership through activities such as *Gaisce, Young Social Innovator*, membership of the HPS committee, the mentoring programme, the prefect system, the green school committee and the student council are promoted in the school. The well organised and autonomous student council meets regularly. It is representative of all year groups and is in regular dialogue with the principal and has met with the board on occasion.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### 1.3. Management of facilities

The school and its facilities are maintained to a high standard. Recent building developments have included the building of a new four-classroom block and a physics laboratory.

Almost all classroom environments supported learning through visually rich displays. Students' work was in evidence in many locations throughout the school including teacher-based classrooms, practical rooms and the school library. There is very good provision of resources for learning including information and communications technology (ICT). The school participates in the *Green Schools* programme and has been awarded a Green Flag for care of the environment.

## 2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

### 2.1. The quality of learning and teaching

Twenty-four lessons across a range of subjects were observed. The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in most lessons and there were some instances of exemplary practice. However, in a few lessons the quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to fair. Teaching approaches, in-class support for student learning needs, assessment practices to support learning and attainment of learning objectives required development in these few lessons.

Learning intentions were established by teachers at the outset of most lessons and successfully revisited in some of these lessons. This good practice should be extended. In a small number of lessons, teachers should have planned for improved levels of student engagement and expanded differentiation practices in order to maximise participation in learning for all students.

Teachers were very well prepared for most lessons and selected assessment practices that advanced students' learning. In the main, there was an appropriate balance between teacher instruction and student activity. In a very small number of lessons, learning outcomes were not achieved due to unsatisfactory teaching approaches and inadequate assessment. In such instances, lessons should be conducted at an appropriate pace so that all students are accommodated to practise new skills and to consolidate their learning.

Teachers spoke consistently in the target language in language lessons and students were confident in using this language in both asking and responding to questions and during group and pair activities.

A wide range of important skills was developed across a range of subjects, including oral and practical skills. Student confidence building was prioritised through being given opportunities to present their work, and critical thinking skills were supported during various classroom interactions.

Students were actively engaged in meaningful activities in almost all lessons and their learning was optimised and supported by an appropriate level of challenge. In some lessons, students were encouraged to reflect, assess and evaluate their experiences. Best practice was observed when teachers organised lesson activities so that students could lead the learning process. Some classroom layouts in group settings contributed to maximising students' contribution to learning.

Students' enjoyment of learning and sense of motivation were evident in most lessons and were frequently linked to a sense of making progress and achievement. The good rapport between teachers and students was a very positive feature of all lessons. Teachers affirmed students' efforts and responses to questions. In some lessons, students could have been set an advance research task to encourage discussion. In a small number of lessons, content was not explicitly linked to real-life applications; in these lessons the use of ICT to display exemplars or case studies relevant to the topic being taught could have benefitted students' understanding of lesson material. In many lessons, ICT was utilised very effectively and significantly supported learning, especially when it was well integrated into the lesson.

The development of literacy and numeracy skills in some lessons worked very well in supporting and developing learning. A whole-school approach to the use of specific literacy and numeracy strategies in classrooms to progress agreed targets of the SSE process is required. Best practice was observed when cross-curricular themes and co-curricular links were established.

Effective assessment practices were in evidence in most lessons where assessment for learning was firmly established. Formative written feedback from teachers was generally of a high standard and encouraged and directed a positive approach to corrections and improvement. Teachers provided individual oral feedback to students in many lessons. Questioning strategies worked well overall and encouraged higher-order thinking skills, though teachers should consider a better balance between global and directed questioning. Best practice was in evidence when student worksheets were differentiated.

Outcomes in certificate examinations are consistently very good with a high proportion of students taking examinations at higher level.

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

#### **3.1. Management**

Good progress has been made in implementing most of the recommendations from previous inspection reports. The recommendation relating to appropriate timetabled access for all students for PE has not been fully achieved.

#### **3.2. Learning and teaching**

Good progress has been made in implementing most of the recommendations in previous evaluations, for example, very good use was made of the target language, and ICT and assessment protocols were evident in many lessons. However, in a small number of subject areas there is scope for development



in relation to recommendations made on the pace of the lessons, the choice of teaching methodologies used and in the area of curriculum planning.

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

Those leading SSE have engaged satisfactorily with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching and learning. The literacy team has been proactive in implementing progressive whole-school literacy development initiatives. It is advisable that the numeracy team now investigate pertinent whole-school initiatives as part of the SSE process. It is recommended that the school strengthen its SSE process to ensure targets are routinely embedded in classroom practice and that a whole-school partnership approach in keeping with the SSE guidelines is followed. The *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020* should inform practice. The monitoring of the implementation of SSE strategies and targets could be more systematic, and it is advisable that SSE is regularly discussed at staff meetings and at board meetings.

The experience of students and parents in the school is very positive as evidenced from the very good responses to the questionnaires administered as part of the WSE-MLL process. The leadership skills and style of the senior management team and the overall desire and willingness of the staff to progress initiatives for the benefit of students indicates very good capacity for ongoing school improvement.

# **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 what we consider to be a very positive, encouraging and insightful report.

We note a number of highlights:

As a Board, we provide good overall quality leadership for the school and promote a spirit of partnership within the school community.

Our senior management team is highly committed and welcomes individual and collective staff contributions, where teachers have a tangible and highly valued input into the decision making process.

The quality of teaching and learning is biased towards the higher quartile of good to very good with instances of exemplary practice and the good rapport between teachers and students was a very positive feature of all lessons.

Our students' enjoyment of learning and sense of motivation evident in most lessons was noted and the school is being commended for the range of targeted initiatives we have established for student wellbeing.

The interviewing and surveying of parents resulted in the parents reporting a high level of satisfaction with school management, the quality of pastoral care and the quality of teaching and learning in 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.**

We are very pleased that the report finds many areas for praise that have arisen from the hard work and efforts of the Board, its predecessors, the Principal, her Senior Management team, the teaching staff, the Parents Association and the patronage of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Board has, at its last meeting, considered the report and is encouraged by the recognition by the Inspectors of a number of new initiatives and the strengthening of existing measures and in the context of continuous improvement, accepts the recommendations proposed in the report.

An initial set of thirteen actions have been taken from the report's recommendations (five from the summary and an additional eight from the body of the report) which will now be assigned to members of the Board or the Senior Management team to take the lead on. A discussion on their priority and the assignment of resources will take place at the next Board meeting in April.

The context for the actions will be created by the collaborative development of the new strategic plan. As our ten year plan is nearing conclusion, we envisage the creation, communication, dialogue and agreement for its replacement to be an inclusive process that will deliver the strategic plan by December of this year.

Other actions are more immediate such as our benchmarking of the school's provision for students with additional needs and their academic monitoring for which we have retained an expert in the field with previous Departmental experience. Members of the Learning Support Department and Senior Management will work with him to identify areas where the learning experience of students with additional needs can be enhanced, with a view to implementing changes at the commencement of the new academic year.

The Board and the Senior Management team are aware of the historical imbalance of responsibility associated with some posts and when the restrictions imposed by the current industrial relations climate are relaxed, will take steps to re-allocate responsibilities.

Our commitment to CPD remains undiminished and we are happy to support the inclusion of new and refreshed learning techniques in the ongoing cycle of professional development for our teaching staff.

The report notes that the commitment of staff to providing a holistic education to all students indicates a very good capacity for ongoing school improvement and so, we are confident that the

Board of Management and the Senior Management of the school, in co-operation with all the stakeholders engaged in our learning community, are very well placed to successfully implement the recommendations and continue to deliver upon the school's mission statement.

## 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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;