

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Árdscoil Rís
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Griffith Avenue Dublin 9
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60420L

Date of Evaluation: 21-09-2017



What is 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.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	21-09-2017
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

Árdscoil Rís is a voluntary secondary school for boys with a current enrolment of 523 students. The school is under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). A range of programmes is on offer which includes the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), which is an optional programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate. The school serves primarily the parish of Marino and the surrounding areas.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of leadership and management is good overall; the development and implementation of a school improvement plan has yet to be progressed.
- The quality of leadership for learning is effective overall.
- Middle management performs the duties attached to their role with commitment; there is a need for a review of the schedule of posts to meet the changing needs of the school.
- The school is very committed to supporting students with special educational needs (SEN); a few aspects of the whole-school organisation of learning-support provision require review.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with examples of very good practice noted in some lessons; there is scope to improve aspects of differentiation and formative assessment practice.
- The school demonstrates a commendable capacity for school improvement and the implementation of recommendations from previous inspections is good overall.
- Action is required to improve and progress school self-evaluation (SSE); limited engagement with the SSE process to date was reported to be a result of industrial action.

Recommendations

- The board should make arrangements for the preparation of a school improvement plan in line with the requirements of Circular 40/2016.
- The revised schedule of posts should provide greater opportunities for instructional leadership and curriculum development.
- A consistent approach by all teachers delivering SEN to the planning for and review of student progress should be developed.
- Whole-school approaches that support differentiation and effective questioning in lessons should be further developed in order to provide appropriate challenge for all learners.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

1 QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The overall quality of school leadership and management is good.

The board of management and senior management team make deliberate efforts to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. In almost all instances the timetabled allocation to subjects is in accordance with syllabus guidelines. However, a few timetabling shortfalls need to be addressed. For example, the provision for Physical Education (PE) in senior cycle is not in line with the allocation set out in the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools. Any such inconsistency should be addressed by senior management.

Incoming first-year students choose subjects in advance of starting in Árdcoil Rís. The principal and special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator visit some local primary schools and an information evening is organised for parents. Good procedures are in place to support senior-cycle students to make informed subject choices; there is scope to develop practice at junior cycle. Findings from questionnaire data indicate that a majority of the students surveyed either disagreed or did not know if they got helpful advice and information when choosing subjects. The guidance department is cognisant of a need to link more with incoming first-year students and develop procedures to support students in making informed subject choices at junior cycle.

Commendably, there has been a review of the TY programme. The programme has been expanded with the addition of a third class due to demand. TY students complete work experience and partake in a social placement one day a week. Whilst this placement is beneficial for students' social development, there is a considerable amount of time being afforded to this placement in relation to other curricular components of the programme. Therefore, the overall length of the social placement should be reviewed with regard to the possible effect on the overall breadth of the curriculum programme provided in TY.

Access to the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is open to all students who fulfil the necessary vocational subject grouping requirements. While this good practice provides additional options for certification, the current uptake of the programme is low. LCVP is well planned and co-ordinated. It is advisable, during the annual review of the programme, to consider how the school promotes the programme and the reasons for the decline in uptake of LCVP should be further investigated.

Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) is delivered to junior-cycle students during one period per week. Senior-cycle Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided as part of Religious Education (RE). However, a small number of LCVP students do not attend RE as they are timetabled for the link modules. As a matter of priority, the school should ensure that all students are timetabled for RSE in line with Circular 0037/2010. Additionally, findings from parent and student questionnaires indicate that there is a need to look at how the school communicates the contents of the RSE programme with them.

The school provides a good range of career and personal guidance supports. There is a comprehensive whole-school guidance plan in place which clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder. Systems have been developed that allow for an integrated approach to supporting the needs of specific students. In addition, a well-being committee has been formed and has overseen the development of a programme of work to meet the needs of the students.

Very good quality of care is provided for students. The student care system is very well supported; senior management, year heads, the guidance counsellor and the SEN coordinator comprise the care team. The care team meets each week to co-ordinate actions and its work is typified by an effective level of co-operation; it communicates appropriately with the whole school on pastoral care matters.

Commendably, the school is very committed to supporting students with SEN. It is acknowledged by school management and staff that a few aspects of the whole-school organisation of learning-support provision need attention. At the time of the evaluation a new core team and coordinator were in place. At present, there is no staff member with a specialist qualification in SEN, although a teacher is engaged currently in an appropriate course. Students are provided with additional support through individual or small-group withdrawal, and some team-teaching is provided in Mathematics. Student profiles for most year groups have been compiled and parents have been involved in this process; this is very good practice. There is a need for a more consistent implementation and integration of systems of planning for and reviewing individual student's progress. It is recommended that a consistent approach be adopted by all teachers delivering SEN.

There is a culture of sharing practice informally amongst staff. It is good practice that some subject departments have undertaken to formalise sharing resources using an online platform and other departments have begun to discuss and plan peer observation. Moving forward, the senior management team should consider these staff initiatives as a means of further sharing teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Managing the organisation

The board has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities. It is good practice that agenda items such as teaching and learning and child protection are included in all meetings. The principal and the board monitor the use of budgets, personnel and other resources through a finance sub-committee. The board is committed to ensuring that financial resources are directed towards supporting teaching and learning. It is established practice for the board to circulate an agreed report from its meetings to the appropriate stakeholders of the school.

A policy audit has been carried out recently. It details that while all of the mandatory policies are in place, a large number are in need of updating. The board should oversee the planned development of updated policies and should initiate a systematic and rolling review of all school policies.

Additionally, while SEN supports and procedures are referenced in a number of existing school policies, there was no whole-school SEN policy in place at the time of the evaluation. In order to reflect the good practice that is evident in the school in supporting students who have additional educational needs, the relevant information should be collated and developed into a whole-school SEN policy.

The admissions policy is clear and reflects the school's focus to serve primarily the parish of Marino. Currently, the school is oversubscribed and it is good practice that the admissions policy is regularly reviewed.

During the evaluation, classroom management and student behaviour were of a very high standard. The code of behaviour sets out clear expectations for the students. Staff and parents reported that the code of behaviour works well and agreed discipline procedures are good in the school. The code has been identified for review to reflect the lived practice of day-to-day implementation.

School management has identified a range of developmental priorities; these include improving infrastructure and progressing school self-evaluation (SSE). While good progress is evident—for example, in the recent building works to ensure that all students can access the school—the absence of an over-arching action plan limits the school's capacity to monitor actual progress. It is recommended that the board, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, develop a school improvement plan that support the achievement of each priority.

The principal and deputy principal manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The senior management team has developed and implemented effective formal in-school systems for communicating information. Staff and students reported that the senior management team is very accessible.

The management of facilities is good. During the evaluation, a health and safety concern was noted with particular reference to a practical room. School management should plan, as resources permit, for the health-and-safety concern identified and the whole-school safety policy should be updated to reflect this.

Leading school development

There are very good links between the board, its trustees and the senior management team. The principal's report keeps the board informed of initiatives taking place in the school.

The principal and deputy principal have defined roles and responsibilities which they undertake effectively. They adopt a collegial approach to the running of the school. The provision of high-quality teaching and learning is a central vision underpinning the work of senior management. This is evidenced in the development of a curriculum board, and through the engagement with instructional leadership courses.

The parents' council is highly committed to the school and meetings are held on a regular basis, with high levels of attendance. Almost all parents surveyed as part of the evaluation are happy with the school and the parents' council reports that its partnership with the school is strong. Partnership is further supported by the attendance of the deputy principal at all parent council meetings.

Developing leadership capacity

The principal and deputy principal have sought to identify relevant and purposeful development opportunities for teachers. New junior-cycle subject specifications for the relevant subjects are being implemented. Planning for whole-staff continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of teaching and learning is a priority for senior management and CPD on Junior Cycle Reform is planned.

Responsibilities for various aspects of school provision are distributed among a middle-management team. Each post-holder has a schedule of agreed duties; they perform the duties attached to their role with commitment. The principal reported that there are informal meetings with post-holders to discuss their work. The formalisation of this process would be worthwhile to promote an engagement in collaborative review. While reviews of posts have taken place in recent years, it has been identified there is a need for a review of the schedule of posts to meet the current priorities of the school in areas such as curriculum development. In the scheduled review, it is recommended that post-holder duties provide greater opportunities for instructional leadership and curriculum development, and that assigned duties meet the current and future needs of the school.

Staff members are very dedicated to their work. They demonstrate commendable levels of volunteerism in leading initiatives that impact positively on the students' experiences. Furthermore, students are encouraged to engage in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

Student leadership is highly encouraged through a very active student council. The council is heavily involved in the induction of incoming first-year students. The council meets regularly and there is a clear line of communication between the student council and the principal. Student questionnaire findings indicate students would like more say in how things are done in the school; this is an area that could be discussed and explored further.

Child Protection Procedures

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. During the evaluation, it was noted that not all members of the board of management had child protection training. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

2 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of learning and teaching in the lessons observed was good, with examples of very good practice noted in some lessons. There is scope to improve planning for differentiation and further develop teacher questioning in order to enhance the quality of students' learning.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Students were attentive and engaged in the learning activities assigned during lesson observations. Very good teacher-student rapport was evident in all lessons, and classroom management was very effective. Students were motivated to learn and this was supported by well-planned and structured lessons.

In the main, students demonstrated high levels of interest and participation in learning. In many lessons students seemed comfortable to contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion, listened respectfully to their peers, asked questions and suggested possible solutions confidently.

To structure the lesson content, teachers outlined to students the learning intentions at the outset. This approach was most effective in a few lessons where the intention was expressed in terms of what students should know or be able to do and when progress was assessed either during or at the end of the lesson.

There were some opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning in almost all lessons. This was facilitated through pair or group work. While there were opportunities for students to work together, teachers should be mindful of the need for balance between teacher and student input and assure that appropriate time is assigned for students to engage actively with the learning task. Where collaborative learning opportunities were most effective, students were assigned a problem that necessitated their analysis, discussion, collation of information and application of lesson material. The activities were well structured and the plenary sessions facilitated and reinforced the learning, whilst supporting students' independent learning and reflection.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Good differentiation for students of varying abilities was evident in some lessons. This was noted through the oral questions teachers posed and in one-to-one interactions with students. However, in the majority of lessons, a whole-class approach to teaching and assessment was adopted. In order to appropriately challenge students in a mixed-ability setting, it is recommended that subject departments further integrate differentiated methodologies to ensure all students are challenged appropriately.

The quality of in-class assessment was appropriate although some possibilities for improvement exist. Teachers made good use of directed and global questioning to monitor students' overall understanding. Where questioning was very effective it was used in a stimulating way to encourage

student enquiry. More variation of questioning strategies, to include higher-order questions that actively engage and challenge students, is recommended.

Most teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) frequently in lessons to guide and structure lessons, to display key information and to engage students with visual resources. The most effective use of ICT was noted when students were given the opportunity to view digital stimuli, or were provided with prompt questions in advance of watching a video clip which guided a purposeful student discussion. Such practice should be extended.

Subject department planning is well established and a review of planning documentation indicated there is good-quality planning. Best practice was noted where schemes of work have been developed that align learning intentions with methodologies and assessment strategies. Reflective templates were evident in subject folders. Where used, they recorded collective reflections effectively and identified areas for further development. Such an approach should be adopted more widely.

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

There has been good progress overall in the implementation of recommendations arising from previously completed evaluations. For example, the majority of recommendations made to school management from the previous whole-school evaluation (WSE) report have been implemented and a review of the TY programme has been completed.

Additional work is needed in a few instances to implement fully recommendations made from previous inspection reports; for example, the health-and-safety requirement within a practical room.

Teaching and Learning

Implementation of previous recommendations in respect of teaching and learning is very good. Examples of this include the development of strong links between the TY co-ordinator, tutors and teachers of TY and the development of spoken Irish with students in lessons. The recommendation of sharing good practices in relation to questioning techniques has been adopted by the science department.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Action is required to improve the school's engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. At the time of the evaluation, limited progress in SSE was evident. The school reported that the momentum of their involvement in the SSE process stalled as a result of industrial action. To date, a literacy improvement plan has been drafted but has yet to be ratified at board level and shared with the school community. A numeracy improvement plan has not been completed. The school needs to progress and embed work in these areas in line with Circular 40/2016. The board of management should also communicate progress in SSE, in an accessible way, to the school community.

With regard to the current cycle of SSE, the school has identified the area of SEN for improvement. With this in mind, the school in progressing this improvement plan should identify the actions to be taken to implement initiatives, outline how the effectiveness of this initiative will be monitored and how, in respect of in-class strategies, the school will embed this work.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school demonstrates a commitment to and a good capacity for school improvement. This is evidenced by the effective procedures the school undertook in changing the school timetable. A number of external and internal surveys were undertaken and analysed successfully. The ways in which feedback from students, parents and teachers have informed the enhancement of the timetable is an example of such good work.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management wishes to commend the staff, students and parents of Ard Scoil Rís on a very positive report. The Board is particularly happy to see the caring aspect of our work being highlighted along with the high quality of relationships within our school community. The Board is happy that the dedication of our teaching staff and the high levels of engagement of our students is acknowledged in the report. The report gives the school community clear scope to develop and build upon the positive practices evident in our 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 Board notes the recommendations contained in the report and will devise a strategy and timeline to implement each one. In the context of devising a school improvement plan as well as developing whole school approaches that support differentiation, the school had already identified Whole-School Differentiation as its focus for SSE. Since the Inspection in early September, an SSE Coordinator has been appointed, a core team has been established and the process of SSE is making good progress.

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;