

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Gonzaga College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Sandford Road Ranelagh Dublin 6
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60530S

Date of Evaluation: 22-05-2017



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

Dates of inspection	03-05-2017 to 22-05-2017
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

Gonzaga College is a Catholic, fee-charging boys' school, under the auspices of the Society of Jesus. The school has a current enrolment of 551 boys and serves an urban catchment area in south Dublin. The school offers the new Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate, the established Leaving Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Most aspects of school governance are highly effective; however, there are some unresolved issues in professional relationships among staff that have the potential to detract from the necessary focus on students.
- Management leads the school effectively, fostering a culture in which learning flourishes, with high expectations for student learning and participation in school activities.
- The current post structure does not fully meet the needs of the school.
- The student care structures and systems for academic monitoring are highly effective.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with aspects of highly effective practice and some areas requiring improvement identified.
- Good progress has been made on the implementation of most of the recommendations from previous inspections and the school has a very good capacity to improve.
- The school is not fully compliant with implementation of the Junior Cycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board, principal, deputy principal and teachers should work as a community to bring about a resolution to issues in professional relationships, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- A review of posts and a needs-analysis for leadership roles should be progressed without delay, and serious consideration should be given to including a post with responsibility for leading learning in the school.
- To improve the learning experience for all students, all teachers should plan and implement strategies for differentiation and assessment for learning in lessons, and should ensure a balance between student and teacher voice.

- Subject departments should develop plans that are active documents, designed to be used by teachers to reflect on and improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management:

Most aspects of school governance are highly effective. The board of management is highly committed. It is properly constituted and is aware of its statutory obligations and governance role. The board began its term of office in 2016-17, but continuity has been provided through the reappointment of some of the previous board members. The board benefits from a wide breadth of experience and all board members have received training. The school's guiding vision, which lays out clear, high expectations, is communicated very effectively and is well embedded throughout the school. There are very good links between the board and trustee body, both nationally and internationally. The board has overseen the creation of an effective school plan that includes a school development plan. The plan identifies areas of focus and outlines those responsible for those areas, actions required and success criteria. Policies are adopted and reviewed as needs arise or in response to legislative requirements. Currently the ladder of referral is unclear in the Code of Behaviour; this should be reviewed to provide such clarity. Most relevant school policies are inclusive; however, the wording of the school's enrolment policy should be reviewed to remove any possible perceived barriers to inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN).

There are some unresolved issues in professional relationships among staff that have the potential to detract from the necessary focus on students. The trustees, board, principal, deputy principal and teachers should work as a community to bring about a resolution, in keeping with the ethos of the school.

Partnership with parents is central to the school ethos. The parents' council is actively involved in the school, playing a role in policy review and supporting ongoing school activities. The board of management provides an agreed report for staff and the parents' association after each meeting. However, feedback from teacher and parent questionnaires indicates that there is scope for the board to improve communication with them. It is suggested that the board invite members of staff to present directly to it about school activities they are involved in, in order to increase their voice. It is also suggested that the board liaise with the parents' council to increase awareness of its role among the parent body.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The principal and deputy principal lead the school effectively. They have a partnership approach to the leadership and management of the school and work well together. They strive to promote equality of opportunity for all students and strive to ensure that all staff support this ethos. They encourage teamwork in all aspects of school life.

The principal demonstrates a clear understanding of change processes and keeps abreast of developments in the wider educational environment, using this information very effectively for the benefit of the school. He recognises the importance of distributed leadership and has empowered teachers to take on leadership roles. He prioritises and delegates responsibilities well and ensures that systems are in place to meet the needs of the school.

The school actively encourages and supports teachers to engage in continuing professional development (CPD). Teachers are deployed in accordance with their qualifications and training. However, not all teachers involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education have attended available training and this needs to be addressed.

The current post structure does not fully meet the needs of the school. Currently, the school funds many posts from its own income and has not filled two Department-funded posts of responsibility. It is welcomed that management plans to carry out a review of posts and a needs-analysis for leadership roles required in the school. This should be progressed without delay and management should give serious consideration to including a post of responsibility for leading learning in the school. Senior management should also provide a forum to allow middle leaders who are not year heads to share their collective expertise to benefit the school.

The school is not compliant with time in school (circular M29/95) as sixth years are currently not offered 167 days of instruction. The board and principal should ensure that all year-groups are offered a minimum of 167 days' tuition.

Senior management fosters a culture in which learning flourishes. Teachers are encouraged to develop their planning, teaching, learning and assessment practices. The principal and deputy principal set high expectations for student learning and for participation in school activities.

Student leadership opportunities are promoted effectively throughout the school. These include participation in the democratically elected student council, peer-tutoring, the prefect system and the leadership opportunities available in the many co-curricular activities on offer in the school. It is welcomed that the board intends to invite the student council to present at its meetings. In addition, management and staff should consider strengthening the role of the student council so that the very considerable capacities of students can be harnessed to the benefit of the school.

There is an effective SEN team in place in the school, which includes teachers with specialist training in the area. Individual education plans are in place for students with additional needs, in line with good practice. Care and monitoring procedures in the school are highly effective and feedback from both students and parents about this area was very positive. The collaborative care team, year heads, form tutors and student prefects play key roles in the pastoral care structure. Senior management meets regularly with both the care team and year heads to ensure the effective running of the school.

Regular contact with the guidance counsellor is facilitated for students. Study skills and anti-bullying talks are given to junior cycle students. There is scope to improve Guidance at senior cycle. TY students complete a comprehensive guidance project. Fifth and sixth year students complete an online guidance programme and may attend individual sessions; however, there is currently no timetabled Guidance in place. It is recommended that Guidance be timetabled for all senior students.

The school offers a compulsory TY programme which is integral to the curriculum and highly valued by students. The modular programme allows students to gain a wide range of experiences

through sampling senior cycle subjects, non-academic modules, going on trips and participating in the *Gaisce* award scheme.

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 Post-Primary Schools*.

1.3. Management of facilities

The school has excellent facilities which are maintained to a very high standard.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1. The quality of learning and teaching

Twenty-two lessons were observed, covering all core subjects and a representative range of optional, practical, and non-examination subjects. The lessons selected involved all year groups including TY, and included lessons delivered by about half of the total teaching staff.

Overall, the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good. Aspects of highly effective practice were noted in many lessons. In a minority of lessons, teaching was adequate, and aspects requiring improvement were identified during the lesson observations.

Good or very good lesson preparation was observed in the majority of lessons. This was characterised by careful preparation of useful and constructive resources and materials. Practice was deemed to be very good where resources and materials were both supportive and challenging, giving students the structure and stimulus necessary to build and extend their understanding. It was clear that lessons had been carefully planned when the teaching approaches and learning activities selected served to develop and deepen students' understanding of the topic or concept, and provide opportunities for them to acquire and consolidate the relevant skills. The effective practices noted above are key elements of teacher preparation to engage students in active learning, and are worth extending.

Where scope for development in lesson preparation was identified, materials and resources had not been adequately prepared to meet the needs of learners at different stages of understanding and development. A minority of lessons lacked the planning and preparation required to engage all learners, including the very able and the more challenged students. Preparation for differentiated learning should therefore be incorporated into all lesson planning.

In the good and very good learning activities observed, as was the case in most lessons, the tasks were well organised, their purpose was clearly communicated, and an appropriate choice of individual or group task was made. Students' engagement and learning were closely monitored, students were encouraged and supported to persist with the work, and mistakes were used positively to clarify and build on learning. The final sharing and consolidation of learning was well managed. Practice was highly effective where many or all of these components combined to bring about very purposeful and productive learning. In a few lessons, there was insufficient direction to students as to procedure and purpose, tasks were insufficiently linked to learning intentions, and too little time was allowed for consolidation of learning. Learning activities should be planned

to provide students with opportunities to build and extend learning, and develop skills of investigation and analysis.

Teachers used their subject expertise effectively by presenting, explaining and developing the lesson topic in a way that made it accessible and engaging for students. Highly effective practice was noted where teachers used their expertise and enthusiasm to create and exploit rich learning opportunities for students. This combination of subject knowledge and pedagogical skill is crucial to excellence in classroom practice. In a few lessons, teachers relied too much on direct exposition or lecturing, which did not engage students and led to passivity, and in some instances teachers' knowledge was not sufficiently mediated to allow students to access it at an appropriate level. Teachers should be mindful of the need to vary approaches to accommodate the range of learners and to differentiate learning where necessary.

In all the language lessons observed, there was good use of the target language by teachers and between teachers and students. At times, however, lack of differentiated activities led to teachers resorting unnecessarily to English translation. There is significant scope to increase opportunities for students to use the target language themselves, and teachers should plan tasks and activities which require students to talk to each other in the language they are learning, thereby developing confidence and skills.

Good and very good questioning was observed in the majority of lessons. This was characterised by the use of a range of question types from basic recall to questions requiring students to link prior and new learning, or to explain and justify their responses. In many lessons, questioning of named students ensured whole-class coverage. Highly effective questioning was observed in a significant minority of lessons where students were required to produce a developed and well-articulated response. Some excellent instances of encouraging students to use specific terminology in responses were noted, and indicated a commendable focus on subject-specific literacy. In a minority of lessons, global questions to the whole class were overused, resulting in a limited range of students responding. In some cases, more higher-order questioning would have served to assess students' ability to explain their learning. To build on the good practice observed, all teachers should use questioning as a means to assess learning in the lesson, to inform teaching, and to extend and deepen students' understanding. Consideration could be given to 'hands down' strategies and increased wait time to encourage more developed responses.

The quality of learning in most lessons observed was either very good or good. Students were well organised and prepared to work, and applied themselves very diligently. They were generally reflective and very articulate, showing high levels of understanding in their responses and questions, and very good recall of prior learning. Students' behaviour towards each other and their teachers was very good, and they collaborated very effectively when offered opportunities to do so. Some areas of concern arose from observation of learning, and from student questionnaire responses. Opportunities to work collaboratively were not observed in many lessons, and a significant minority of students disagreed or did not know, when asked by questionnaire if they had opportunities to work with other students. While levels of student engagement were generally good, some students did not participate actively, and a significant minority disagreed or did not know when asked by questionnaire if they found lessons interesting. The post-holder with responsibility for leading learning in collaboration with the whole teaching staff should reflect on these findings and consider how to optimise students' capacity to work together and how to enhance student engagement.

Good assessment practices were observed in the majority of lessons and have been referred to above in positive aspects of questioning and learning activities. Elements of assessment for learning were noted in written feedback, but not consistently. Students' responses to questionnaires indicate that current assessment practices of students' written work merit serious reconsideration; a significant minority disagreed or did not know when asked if their work was regularly corrected and if teachers told them how to improve their work. While the school has engaged with the principles of assessment for learning, there is considerable work to be done to implement practice, particularly in relation to students' written work. The purpose of assessment for learning is to ensure that learning is happening and that students know what and how to improve. The school's assessment policy and practice should support this purpose.

All teachers have their own base classroom. Some teachers have provided a print rich environment with displays of student work which contribute to the student learning experience. All teachers should adopt this good practice. Most classrooms are laid out in a traditional seating manner not conducive to pair or group activity. Teachers should give consideration to optimal classroom layout for the specific learning requirements of their subjects.

There was clear evidence of professional collaboration and engagement in effective teaching and learning practices. However, formal aspects of subject planning require some development. Many subject plans are textbook driven and they do not always reflect actual good practice taking place in the classroom. Subject plans should be active documents, designed to be used by teachers to reflect on and improve teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers should consider the standards for collective and collaborative practice from *Looking at Our School 2016* to guide them in the further development of subject planning.

Teachers are implementing the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and are using the specifications to plan for teaching and learning in English and Science. Teachers have facilitated completion of tasks required for classroom-based assessments in English but no subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings have taken place. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action. Teachers should implement all aspects of junior cycle specifications and should engage in SLAR meetings.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1. Management

There have been previous inspections in the school in Music, Physical Education, Business subjects, the TY programme and English. There has been good progress in the implementation of management recommendations.

3.2. Learning and teaching

Previous teaching and learning recommendations were implemented in the majority of lessons. As outlined above, there has been partial progress with recommendations in relation to collaborative subject planning.

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

The school embarked on the school self-evaluation process in 2014. There is evidence of useful and sometimes challenging work in which teachers reflected on current practice and identified areas for development that are outlined in the school improvement plan. These are consistent with teaching and learning findings and recommendations in this evaluation. It was reported that, due to industrial action, there were difficulties in the current academic year with organising collaboration to continue the self-evaluation process. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the development and implementation of whole-school improvement plans is required and should be progressed.

Overall, the school has very good capacity to improve as there are effective leadership and management structures in place, in addition to a positive attitude to school improvement among teachers, parents, students and the board.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Gonzaga College SJ welcomes the report which affirms the work of the College and particularly identifies the following:

- Highly effective and highly committed school governance by the Board of Management
- The school's guiding vision as a Jesuit school which lays out clear, high expectations, is communicated very effectively and is well embedded throughout the school
- Senior management fosters a culture in which learning flourishes. Teachers are encouraged to develop their planning, teaching, learning and assessment practices. The principal and deputy principal set high expectations for student learning and for participation in school activities.
- School management has a partnership approach to the leadership of and management of the school and strives to promote equality of opportunity for all students and encourage teamwork in all aspects of school life
- The principal demonstrates a clear understanding of change processes and uses this information very effectively for the benefit of the school. The principal recognises the importance of distributed leadership, he prioritises and delegates responsibilities well and has empowered teachers to take on leadership roles.
- The student care structures and systems for academic monitoring are highly effective
- Teaching and learning is good with aspects of highly effective practice observed
- Overall the school has very good capacity to improve as there are effective leadership and management structures in place and a positive attitude to school improvement

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 welcomes the recommendations and suggestions contained in the report. We are fully committed to working with staff, students and parents to implement them. The recommendations will be incorporated into the College's development plan and the school self-evaluation process and are currently being acted on.

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
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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 very good standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;