

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

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

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Sandford Park School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Sandford Road Ranelagh Dublin 6
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60640C

**Date of Evaluation: 10-05-2018**



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

## **WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING**

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

### **How to read this report**

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

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

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

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment 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	8, 9, 10-05-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with board of governors</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></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with parents</li><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 senior management team, board of governors and teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Sandford Park School was established in 1922 as a secondary school for boys, based on the French non-secular system. The school today is a fee-charging, non-denominational school and is co-educational since 2013. There are currently 350 students enrolled, most of whom live locally although some students travel from further afield and there is also a significant number of international students. The school is run by a board of governors reporting to a trustee body set up as a holding company with limited liability. The school has grown significantly in recent years and projected enrolments see that growth continuing. The school curriculum comprises the new junior cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- Senior management leads and manages the school very effectively; however, there is a need to develop a middle management role for assistant principals.
- The school does not have a board of management but is managed by a board of governors that is highly committed to the school and has a wide range of expertise and skills; however, the board is not representative of all stakeholders.
- In the main, there are very good supports in place for students with additional educational needs, and excellent care structures ensure a holistic and caring learning environment.
- The quality of learning was very good overall while the quality of teaching ranged from good to very good overall; some areas for improvement were observed in relation to differentiation and formative assessment.
- The formal curriculum is primarily academic; students are also facilitated to engage in a very wide range of extra and co-curricular events in Music, the sciences, sports, the arts, debating, drama and languages.
- Recommendations from previous evaluation have been largely implemented and the school has engaged very well with the school self-evaluation process; capacity for improvement is very good.

#### Recommendations

- The board of governors should consider the establishment of a board of management with teacher and parent nominees in line with good practice and a spirit of partnership as envisaged by the Education Act (1998).
- The role of middle management should be further developed to assist senior management in driving future change and development.

- Consideration should be given to broadening the curriculum to include a wider range of practical subjects to meet the needs of all students.
- The promotion of effective differentiation strategies should be adopted as a whole school initiative.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

#### **Leading learning and teaching**

There is very good leadership of teaching and learning in the school. The principal takes primary responsibility for leading teaching and learning and meets annually with all teachers to review the teaching year and individual contributions to school life and to discuss plans for the coming academic year. Senior management, which comprises the principal and deputy principal, works as an effective team and runs the school efficiently with the aim of achieving the best possible outcomes for the students. The deputy principal provides very good support to the principal and takes on a range of organisational duties including most of the dialogue with current parents and the facilitation of tours of the school for prospective parents. Together the principal and deputy principal work to implement the school mission statement which places emphasis on inclusivity and the holistic development of every student. Daily meetings are held and, while administrative issues are discussed at length, teaching and learning are also central to these discussions.

The principal works effectively with the board of governors and the trustees to implement the mission statement. Highly effective recruitment processes are in place by senior management and the board to endeavour to secure the best possible teaching staff. Staff are encouraged and supported to attend continuing profession development courses and to pursue further professional studies. The principal has presented to staff on the principles of junior cycle reform and implementation. The principal works to promote a culture in which learning flourishes. She and the deputy principal have high expectations for teachers and students.

State examination results are analysed by senior management and staff and are discussed by the board of governors, as are evaluation reports by the Inspectorate. Recommendations from these evaluations are also reviewed by the board.

The school's curriculum is primarily academic. Senior cycle students study eight subjects for Leaving Certificate. Consideration should be given to broadening the curriculum to include a wider range of practical subjects to meet the needs of all students.

A very good TY programme is offered to students. The programme is organised in line with departmental guidelines and both parents and students were enthusiastic about the merits and outcomes of the year in terms of personal development, opportunities for learning through work experience and charitable endeavours as well as a range of taster subjects and modules.

The school has an inclusive ethos and, as a nondenominational school, welcomes all religions and none. The board and senior management team seek to include the wider community by making school facilities available to other schools and clubs and by consulting widely on all building initiatives in a spirit of partnership and inclusion. The board, senior management and staff place a commendable emphasis on charitable endeavours.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Wellbeing are priorities in the school and are being delivered in line with Departmental guidelines.

However, parental and students questionnaires show a lack of awareness of the RSE provision in the school. This should be addressed.

### **Managing the organisation**

The overall quality of school leadership and management is good. However, there is no board of management in the school. The school is managed by a board of governors which is mainly comprised of parents of current and past students, some of whom were former members of the parents' association, and who are chosen by the current board. There are no teacher nominees on the board nor are there parent nominees. The board of governors reports to the relatively recently-established trustee structure, established following a recommendation from a whole school evaluation by the Inspectorate in 2008. While recognising the steps taken since the last whole school evaluation to establish a trustee structure, it is recommended that the board of governors consider the establishment of a board of management with teacher and parent nominees in line with good practice and a spirit of partnership as envisaged by the Education Act (1998).

Board members take a very active interest in the school and regularly attend school events, ceremonies and music and dramatic productions. A comprehensive school plan, including a development plan entitled *Project 22*, is in place. The board has developed a range of policies, through a consultative process with the school community, and these are detailed in a school development planning overview document that includes dates of ratification of policies and dates for review. This is effective practice.

The school is housed in a series of period and modern buildings. The campus is very well maintained and a very effective learning environment is provided throughout the classrooms and specialist rooms. The board has identified a number of additional needs, academic, sporting and in the creative arts and has ambitious plans to expand the school facilities. This work commenced during the evaluation and will be finished in 2022.

The school community prides itself on its range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities focusing on a range of sports, musical recitals and productions, the sciences, the arts, debating, drama and languages. The principal introduced a language exchange system for students a number of years ago, to support language learning and to enhance the learning experiences provided in TY. The board and senior management have plans to extend the opportunities for students in the creative arts, with particular reference to music of all kinds, drama, debating, visual arts and commitment to sport for all.

The school has a vibrant and committed parents' association which meets regularly and supports senior management and the school community in a variety of ways. The association is also committed to encouraging parental networks to ensure that parents of children in the same year group get to know one another. The development of a cohesive and strong school community is a priority for the association.

### **Leading school development**

The board and senior management are committed to ensuring that the school develops to meet the needs of the students and the school community. Personal tablets have been introduced into classroom practice and the further integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching and learning is identified by senior management as a priority. ICT was seen to be used very effectively in many of the lessons observed. School self-evaluation (SSE) has been embraced by senior management and staff and has led to many beneficial literacy and numeracy initiatives. Other priorities identified by senior management and the board of governors include: to further embed

junior cycle reform, a review of posts to support school improvement and SSE, student wellbeing, literacy and numeracy development and *Project 22* which proposes substantial development to the school plant and infrastructure. These priorities were seen to be actively pursued during the evaluation. Commendably the Department's quality framework, *Looking at our School (2016)* is being used by the board and senior management to shape further planning and drive improvement.

First-year students are well supported in the transition to post-primary level and there is a robust mentoring system in place for them. The principal has a particular interest in the benefits of mentoring and in 2014 a staff-student mentoring system was introduced for sixth-year students to support and guide them, to track their academic progress and to prepare them for third-level education. This was reported by parents and staff to be working well and is good practice. Sixth-year students attend parent teachers meetings with their parents.

Additional supports for students' needs is very well managed. Individual education plans are developed for relevant students, teachers are briefed on differentiation strategies and a comprehensive special educational needs (SEN) booklet has been prepared for all teachers to guide them in addressing the needs of all students including the exceptionally able. A sensory room for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is planned as part of *Project 22*. Some students with SEN, English as an additional language attend supervised study in the library during periods where they might be exempted from language learning or on a reduced timetable; this provision needs review to ensure that the school's procedures and the use of additional teaching resources for students are brought in line with *Circular 0014/2017* and the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.

The guidance service makes a significant contribution to the student support systems. A good guidance counselling plan in place. However, the guidance plan would benefit from being further developed to include details of specific roles and responsibilities for all those involved in Wellbeing, tutor systems and co-ordination posts. The guidance service assumes responsibility for co-ordination of many elements of special educational needs provision. Guidance and SEN, while linked, are two discrete specialist areas. Consideration should be given to the decoupling of SEN from Guidance.

The school has very good pastoral care provision. Form teachers remain with their form for six years ensuring that teachers establish a strong relationship with the students under their care. Wellbeing is a priority. Students spoke very positively of their experiences in the school during the focus group meeting. They stated that they acquired a sense of belonging very quickly, even those who had joined the school after first year, particularly girls who enrolled when the school became co-educational. The student questionnaires were mainly very positive in relation to questions on anti-bullying and feeling safe and cared for in the school.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

The development of leadership capacity in the school is good but there are some areas for development. Although teachers with posts of responsibility fulfil a range of duties, the school is growing and there is a need to redesign some of the tasks associated with the post structure to more fully address current and upcoming needs. A review of posts is scheduled for later in the year and it is intended that this recalibration of posts will be addressed in the proposed review.

Two assistant principals and one teacher with a special duties post currently occupy the roles of coordinator of forms, a role that sees teachers taking on overall responsibility for one or more year groups in collaboration with the form tutors. The current role of form tutor offers opportunities for staff to take a leadership role. Teachers with posts do not currently meet as a middle management structure. The board and the principal are committed to establishing systems and structures to meet the priority needs of the school. It is intended, as the school is growing, to develop the role of year heads or coordinators for individual year groups and this will provide additional opportunities for

staff to take leadership roles. It is timely therefore that the middle management structure be reviewed to support senior management and help to drive the school's identified priorities.

All teachers take on an area or areas of responsibility outside of their teaching duties which is good practice and shows a commendable commitment. These responsibilities cover a range of organisational, co-curricular and extra-curricular work such as organising school committees, themed weeks, enterprise initiatives, charitable initiatives and school productions.

The school commendably offers many opportunities for students to assume leadership roles through the student council, the prefect system, the mentoring programme and the range of committees and musical and dramatic productions. However, the student questionnaires reveal some dissatisfaction with the student voice in the school. This should be discussed with the student body to extend their knowledge of the opportunities available. The school should explore additional ways in which the students can express their voice collectively and contribute to school development as appropriate.

## **2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Twenty-one lessons were observed during the evaluation. The quality of learning was very good overall while the quality of teaching ranged from good to very good. A few lessons required significant improvement to enhance student engagement and voice in the classroom. The areas of differentiation and formative assessment required attention in some lessons.

Learner experiences were very positive in most lessons. Students engaged well with the work of the lesson and this was demonstrated through their answering of questions and in their proffering of comments and often thought provoking opinions. Students also asked questions of teachers to extend their learning; thus demonstrating high levels of motivation to succeed. These teacher-student interactions promoted higher-order thinking skills by students.

Students listened attentively to the teacher during the instructional phase of the lesson. The student voice was actively promoted through the use of pair or group work in almost all lessons. Seating arrangements in a number of classrooms also facilitated involvement from every member of the group. Where traditional seating arrangements still prevail, teachers should consider grouping the desks in a manner that supports an optimum group dynamic. Group tasks were purposeful in most instances and students actively engaged with them. Individual students were further supported by their teachers during this phase of the lesson. However, this work could have been more effective in some cases with some additional direction, differentiation and scaffolding.

In most lessons students were active participants in their own learning. There were many instances where students were afforded the opportunity to research and present their work. Project work carried out in this manner was in most instances supported by very good advance preparation by the teacher, clear instructions and a structured timeframe.

In a few lessons, peer assessment was successfully promoted through the use of guided questions by the teacher indicating to students how to confidently evaluate a piece of work. This is good practice as it fosters capacity for student assessment of their own work.

### **Teachers' individual and collective practice**

There was good evidence of careful planning and preparation for almost all of the lessons. Learning intentions were outlined at the beginning of each lesson. In some instances students were given a clear understanding of what they were expected to achieve by the end of the lesson, while in others the learning intentions were more content focused. All teachers should articulate their learning intentions for the lesson.

Most lessons were well structured and teachers used a variety of methodologies, most of them to good or very good effect. Best practice was noted where teachers used a broad questioning style, creating an appropriate balance between global and directed questions and lower and higher-order questions. In the small number of lessons where the questions were restricted to information recall, teachers should review their questioning style and ensure an appropriate balance between the consolidation of prior learning and challenging students to progress their thinking at a deeper level. Brainstorming and the use of graphic organisers served effectively to elicit students' prior learning and to organise their thoughts and ideas in a structured manner.

ICT was successfully used in most lessons as a tool to support learning. There were some very good examples of digital presentations, video-clips and the use of visualizers contributing effectively to the work of the lesson. Good use of ICT to support independent student research and presentation of project work was observed in a number of lessons.

Effective differentiation was noted in some lessons where students were grouped and assigned specific tasks in line with their individual strengths. Teachers also circulated during group work activities supporting individual groups or students. It was not always clear, however, that the needs of all students were being met during lessons. Teachers need to focus on the needs of all in order to provide additional support or challenge when appropriate. The promotion of effective differentiation strategies should be adopted as a whole-school initiative.

There was good attention to literacy in the explanation of subject-specific terminology and in the promotion of oral literacy skills. However, there was limited attention to numeracy in lessons other than mathematics-related subjects. This needs to be addressed to become an SSE initiative of relevance to all subjects. There was very good use of the target language by teachers in the language lessons, but insufficient opportunity for students to develop their oral language skills in some instances. This should be addressed.

Homework was assigned in all of the lessons. An examination of students' copybooks indicated variation in the frequency of homework assignments and in the correction of work. While some copybooks provided evidence of detailed written formative feedback, there were others where the comments provided did not afford students sufficient awareness of their strengths and areas for development. The practice of giving effective formative feedback should be further developed.

Teachers' collective practice is good. A review of curricular plans indicates a consistent approach to planning at subject department level. While TY planning is good overall, a small number of subject plans for the programme could benefit from further development to show clearly how the content will differ from Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate lessons; learning in all curricular areas should be varied, creative, based on areas of student interest and linked to contemporary life. Teachers reported that they are working collaboratively with regard to the implementation of the junior cycle specifications and that there is now greater discussion of teaching and learning and the sharing of practice.

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

A number of evaluations have been carried out in the last ten years including: Mathematics, SPHE, History, French, and a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) in 2008 which included subject and programme evaluations in English, Science, Biology and TY.

#### **Leadership and Management**

Recommendations in relation to collaborative planning and the nomination of subject co-ordinators have been addressed. Significant progress has been made on the majority of recommendations in



relation to TY. Some further attention to broadening the scope of the TY plan exists in a small minority of subjects.

The overall recommendations from the 2008 WSE have been implemented with partial progress on the recommendation in relation to a more partnership based structure for the board of governors. Changes have been made to the regulatory structure and a trustee body has since been established for the board of governors to report to, but the question of a board of management with teacher and parent nominees has not yet been addressed.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Recommendations from evaluations in relation to teaching and learning were made in the following areas: development of oral skills, more engaging tasks for students, a wider range of methodologies, assessment practices and seating arrangement to facilitate pair and group work. Considerable progress has taken place in almost all of the above areas. The development of oral skills in languages for students is still an area for development in some instances.

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

### **The School's Self-Evaluation Process**

The school's self-evaluation process is very good. The school community has engaged very successfully with SSE and it is high on the list of priorities for both the board and senior management. Current SSE priorities include developing key skills in Wellbeing, numeracy and literacy. Teachers and students have been regularly surveyed on aspects of school provision and on teaching and learning. A parental questionnaire on teaching and learning is in draft form and will be administered next year. Aspects of literacy and numeracy have been developed and reviewed in recent years. Literacy strategies tend to be mainly focused at present on encouraging reading through a range of initiatives. A comprehensive review of numeracy took place in 2016/17. This review has led to the implementation of a number of initiatives and a plan to focus on statistics for the coming academic year. However, references to numeracy were lacking in many classroom observations and there is scope to improve the focus on whole-school numeracy by all teachers.

### **The School's Capacity for Improvement**

The school has very good capacity for improvement. It was clear during the evaluation that all stakeholders were striving for excellence in every aspect of school life. Interactions with the board of governors, the parents, and the teachers all showed a commendable commitment to providing and achieving the best outcomes for students. The school community is self-evaluative in many aspects of its practice and this self-reflection is led and encouraged by the board and senior management.

# **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 Governors welcomes this positive and affirming inspection report. The Board is particularly pleased that the outstanding work of the Principal, Deputy Principal and teaching staff has been recognised.

We believe that face to face tuition is not the only learning context. Many students need reflection time where they can self direct their own learning in an environment that is appropriate with their individual sensory needs. We are listening to the voice of our parents and students, as key stakeholders in their education. We are prioritising each student as an individual to learn in multi and varied ways, one of which is the quiet structured library time. This is done following a written parental request and in collaboration with parents, educational/medical professionals and students in order to maximise the learning potential of each student.

### **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 of Governors undertakes to consider the observations made by the inspectorate regarding its composition.
- A review of the Posts of Responsibility is underway with the aim of further developing a middle management role for assistant principals to assist senior management in driving future change.
- With regard to the curriculum, the school was unsuccessful in its application to be a pilot school for PE as a Leaving Certificate subject. It will explore the introduction of Technical Graphics.
- A facilitator from the SESS spoke to staff at the beginning of this school year on effective differentiation strategies. The staff will implement these strategies at a school and subject department level during this school year.

## 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;