

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Holy Faith Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	1 Belgrove Road Clontarf Dublin 3
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60750J

Date of Evaluation: 06-10-2016



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 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.

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	06-10-2016
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">• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to the senior management team, board of management and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Faith is an all-girls voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Catholic Schools Trust. The current enrolment of 637 girls is drawn mainly from the local primary school. The school provides the Junior Certificate programme, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programmes (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of school ownership and management is very good; the board has established very good links with the trustees and parents' association.
- The principal and newly appointed deputy principal take a partnership approach to leadership and day-to-day management, and are committed to providing a holistic education for all students in a caring environment.
- There is a very good level of engagement with whole-school and subject-specific continuous professional development (CPD) among staff.
- The school infrastructure is of a high standard with very good facilities.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good; differentiation and the facilitation of student-led activity require attention.
- Student leadership is fostered strongly.
- New subject specifications of the revised Junior Cycle are being implemented; however, there are some elements not being delivered due to on-going industrial action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management should oversee the development of an over-arching action plan to support the achievement of school priorities in the short, medium and long term, with progress reviewed regularly.
- Teachers should plan for differentiated strategies and for the inclusion of student-led activities in lessons to appropriately challenge all learners and provide a greater level of learner autonomy.
- Subject plans should be reviewed to include learning outcomes that are sequenced in a manner that demonstrates incremental progression, and linked to specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management

The overall quality of school ownership and management is very good. The board of management is properly constituted. It has a very good understanding of its governance role in terms of policy setting and supporting senior management. In its term of office, the board has overseen the continued implementation of the school's regeneration plan and upgrade of facilities. It has monitored the use of budgets, personnel and other resources effectively to support the on-going development of the school. Clear minutes are kept by the board and it was evident that robust discussion occurs at meetings.

The board has adopted all mandatory policies and reviews these policies as needs arise or in response to legislative requirements. It is advised that a more strategic approach to policy review be adopted to ensure policies reflect current practice and needs in the school. Revised policies should be clearly dated and outline the specific roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing the agreed procedures.

As the current board nears the conclusion of its term of office, it has identified highly relevant areas for further development. These include the establishment of a board of studies and a review of posts of responsibilities. Going forward, it is recommended that the board would oversee the development of an over-arching action plan to support the achievement of priorities in the short, medium and long term, with progress reviewed regularly.

Commendably, the board has established very good links with the trustees and parents' association. In line with good practice, a summary report is provided annually to Le Chéile Schools Trust and an agreed report after each board meeting is prepared for staff and the parents' association. As an extension of this good practice, it is advised that the board establish links with the student council in recognition and encouragement of its role.

The principal and newly appointed deputy principal take a partnership approach to leadership and the day-to-day management of the school. They are committed to providing a holistic education for all students, in a caring environment. They endeavour to be accessible to parents, staff and students. At the time of the evaluation, following its own examination of school priorities, the senior management team was in the process of identifying and redefining its roles to meet the current needs of the school. In so doing, the senior management team is encouraged to focus further on leadership for learning as an area for development.

Student leadership is fostered strongly. A democratically elected student council is in place, and it has been consulted on a number of positive initiatives including upgrading of facilities and promoting health and well-being. Despite such positive action, the response from the survey of students indicated that the general school body would like to have more of a say in how things are done in school. This should be explored by the school management, staff and students as a means to further incorporating student voice in the school.

The parents' association is very supportive and engages actively in school activities such as fundraising, careers' evenings, student interviews and organising social events. The majority of parents surveyed agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that they feel welcome there. Questionnaire results indicate that there is scope to seek parental views on school matters more regularly.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Leadership for learning is good overall. The principal and deputy principal maintain a very good relationship with staff and are committed to maintaining the school's high standard of academic achievement. Staff are deployed according to their qualifications and expertise and it is good practice that the principal consults with teachers each year in the framing of the timetable. In questionnaire responses, the majority of staff agreed that the school is well run and that their views are valued in the decision-making process.

Both the senior management team and the board of management are very supportive of teachers' CPD. The level of engagement demonstrated by staff with whole-school and subject-specific CPD is commendable; as examples, this has involved attendance at the Le Chéile middle-management course, Tóraíocht and special educational needs courses. To further benefit teaching and learning, consideration could be given to the development of a more systematic approach to the sharing of expertise and learning from staff involvement in CPD.

Responsibilities for various aspects of school provision are distributed among a middle-management team of five assistant principals and twelve special duty post-holders. Each has a schedule of assigned duties that range from year-head duties, to responsibility for examinations and cultural development. It is good practice that duties are reviewed annually with the principal. In the forthcoming review intended by the board of management, it is advised that post-holder duties provide greater opportunities for instructional leadership and curriculum development.

The needs of students are supported in a variety of ways with the provision of a broad range of curriculum programmes and subjects. First-year students have opportunity to sample all subjects during the year and are supported by advice from teachers and an information evening for parents when making their choices for second year. Good opportunities are available for students taking the TY programme such as work experience and social and community placements. LCVP is available for senior-cycle students and uptake is very good. The school also supports learning through the provision of afterschool supervised study for third, fifth and sixth year students and Easter study for sixth years. Commendably, a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is provided to support students' holistic educational development.

The board, senior management and teachers monitor the quality of learning and student achievement through an analysis of attainment in certificate examinations compared to national norms and standardised test results; this is good practice. To further inform decisions on class setting and whole-school targets on teaching and learning, the school should also consider various teaching approaches, such as team teaching, as a means to encourage and support students to take higher level.

New subject specifications of the revised Junior Cycle are being implemented; however, there are some elements not being delivered due to on-going industrial action.

At the time of the evaluation, junior-cycle students did not have sufficient allocation of Physical Education (PE). In fifth and sixth year, PE is provided on an option band resulting in some students not receiving any timetabled PE. These arrangements should be reviewed so as to provide PE to all students in line with the *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools*.

Within the current curriculum, provision of Social, Personal and health education (SPHE) is very good and teachers involved have received the appropriate training. It is commended that the principal and deputy principal responded to redress shortcomings identified during the evaluation in relation to the

provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), including a commitment to providing RSE lessons for senior students this year and ensuring the implementation of each area in future.

Following a recent review, a comprehensive guidance policy is being implemented. Appropriate guidance structures are in place for junior and senior-cycle students and regular contact with the guidance counsellor is facilitated. Lessons in curricular Guidance are provided to junior-cycle students through SPHE and as part of the TY programme. However, senior-cycle students who opt for Applied Mathematics and LCVP do not receive timetabled careers' lessons; this should be reviewed with the aim of ensuring a better balance in the guidance provision at senior cycle.

The school welcomes and supports students with special educational needs (SEN) and designated hours are used for their intended purpose. Learning-support provision is very well coordinated by a dedicated team of teachers with specific expertise who work collaboratively to provide both individual support or small-group withdrawal for students. Commendably, a weekly meeting between the SEN coordinator and guidance counsellor is used to further support particular year groups or programmes. The SEN team has developed a range of teaching and learning information and resources to support the learning needs of these students that can be used within mainstream classes. These valuable resources should be incorporated into all subjects' department planning to ensure the consistent implementation of support at classroom level.

A very good prefect system is in place. Students apply in writing for this position and the principal and year head oversee the selection process. An executive council of prefects and a head girl are also appointed to represent students. Prefects undertake a range of responsibilities such as mentoring class groups and librarians. Prefects meet with their designated class group each day and thus contribute to the general care of students.

The code of behaviour sets out clear expectations for all students. During the evaluation, classroom management and student behaviour were excellent. Year heads monitor student behaviour, attendance and academic progress effectively and meet informally with the principal as needs arise. There is good communication between the guidance counsellor and year heads who meet on an informal basis to monitor and support the pastoral care of students. The fact that student well-being has been identified by staff as a school priority, and will be the focus for the next phase of school self-evaluation, is commended. As part of this process, the establishment of a care team should be considered as a means of further supporting student care, with regular formal meetings to focus on the current overall needs of the school, individual year groups and future planning.

The admissions and enrolment policy, reflecting the characteristic spirit of the school, are written in a clear and inclusive manner. To ensure that enrolment procedures align with written policy, the board of management should, as part of its annual review, monitor enrolment procedures to ensure all available places are allocated.

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 overall management of facilities is very good. The school infrastructure is of a high standard with very good facilities; a major refurbishment programme was undertaken in recent years. There are many displays of student work and celebrations of their achievements exhibited on corridors. There

is scope to develop the displays of subject-specific material in many of the classrooms. The administration and auxiliary staff play an important role in supporting the school.

Currently, most classrooms are neither teacher nor student based. Consequently, both students and teachers move between classes. While there was a good sense of order observed in such movement, there was a reduction in tuition time noted in some lessons. The school should consider the effectiveness of this movement and its impact on tuition time.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1. The quality of learning and teaching

During the evaluation, twenty-four lessons were observed over a range of subject areas. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good: differentiation and the facilitation of student-led activity require attention.

Lessons were characterised by mutually respectful interactions between staff and students, and teaching and learning proceeded in a positive atmosphere. Students' co-operation in all lessons was exemplary.

Preparedness for lessons observed was good overall. In the majority of lessons, teachers began with the sharing of learning intentions. Best practice was evident where the learning intentions were expressed in terms of what students should know or be able to do, and were reviewed at the end of the lesson to assess students' progress. The benefits of such good practice should be considered by all teachers.

In the most successful lessons observed where students demonstrated high levels of interest and participation in learning, they were engaged purposefully in meaningful learning activities and were provided with opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively in a very purposeful and productive manner. This level of student engagement was characterised by well-organised tasks involving pair work, group work, reflection worksheets, experiments and learning by doing. Good examples of teaching grammar in context were also evident in the language lessons observed. Some teachers made good use of information communication technology (ICT) in the form of video clips and electronic presentations to engage students with subject content.

In a significant minority of lessons, it was found that there was too much focus on teacher-led discussion and questioning or giving information through teacher notes which students either copied down or highlighted in textbooks. In these lessons, students were mainly passive recipients rather than active in their learning. It is recommended that teachers plan for differentiated strategies and the inclusion of student-led activities to appropriately challenge all learners and provide a greater level of learner autonomy. Students should be supported to take responsibility for their own learning and use the learning resources provided to them to develop their skills and extend their knowledge.

In the majority of lessons, the quality of students' learning was assessed adequately through the use of oral questioning by the teacher. This methodology was most successful where good use was made of higher-order, directed questioning and appropriate 'wait time' was provided to support students in making meaningful connections between school-based learning and their everyday lives. In more than half of lessons, students were mainly required to give overly brief rather than appropriately expansive answers. There is scope for teachers' to reflect on their questioning style to ensure better ongoing assessment of students' learning during lessons.

A review of students' homework journals and copybooks indicated that there is good monitoring and assignment of homework. In over half the lessons observed, teachers made effective use of formative comments on students' written work to guide them on areas for improvement. To build on this good practice, teachers should consider the use of self-assessment and peer-assessment opportunities to support learning.

Subject departments are well established and subject plans have been developed for all areas. In a few cases there was very good planning evident; learning outcomes were sequenced in a manner that demonstrated incremental progression and were linked clearly to specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies. As there was room for improvement in a majority of subject plans, it is recommended that the good practice outlined above be extended to planning for all subjects to direct and guide classroom practice and student experience.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1. Management

Good progress is evident in the implementation of recommendations of previous inspections in respect of management. Contemporary art has been incorporated into the TY programme, an oral component has been introduced for Irish examinations and policies in relation to Guidance and SEN have been reviewed. Norm-referenced student assessments have been introduced for incoming first-years and TY students, and a core team of specialist teachers is providing learning support. It is evidence of positive practice that a review of SPHE and the RSE policy has taken place.

3.2. Learning and teaching

Good progress is evident in the implementation of recommendations of previous inspections in respect of teaching and learning. For example, the science department continues to use a variety of strategies to support students' general literacy, and the Irish department has established *Coiste na Gaeilge* to promote opportunities for students to engage further with the language. There is a need still for greater engagement with previous recommendations relating to the promotion of learner autonomy and the inclusion of integrated differentiated learning strategies, in particular to challenge more able students as also outlined in the teaching and learning section of this report.

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

The school's self-evaluation (SSE) process and capacity for school improvement is good. The school has engaged actively with the SSE process to promote priorities relating to literacy, numeracy and guidance. Good practices have been established such as gathering evidence from staff, students and parents; such evidence was used to determine the focus for the school improvement plan. The board of management should communicate progress in SSE to the school community in an annual summary report.

Overall, the school has a good capacity to improve through the SSE process and have identified student well-being as a priority for the next phase. It is advised, when planning for the next cycle of SSE, to have a clear plan in place regarding the determination of targets, and the implementation, monitoring and review of those targets.

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 of Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, on behalf of all the stakeholders wishes to acknowledge receipt of the WSE-MLL inspection report.

The report affirms many of the very good practices in existence in the school. The Board is delighted with the positive endorsement of the high standards of leadership and management, teaching and learning and school self-evaluation by all the stakeholders. The Board wishes to note that the work of the school is underpinned by the philosophy of Margaret Aylward, founder of the Holy Faith Sisters.

The Board wishes to congratulate and thank the whole school community for its contribution to this outcome.

The Board is particularly happy that the exemplary behaviour of the students was commended and that the mutually respectful interactions between staff and students was noted in the report.

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 recommendations and suggestions in this report will be addressed over the coming 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 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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;