

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Cavan Co. Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61070P

Date of Evaluation: 25-09-2019



**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 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	23-09-2019 - 25-09-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Board of Management • Meetings with principal and deputy principals • 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

Loreto College is an all-girls' voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 702 students who are drawn from a large number of feeder schools. Programmes offered are the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of school management is good and the quality of leadership is satisfactory; aspects of strategic planning, the operation of the specific leadership roles and communication processes require further development.
- A good range of programmes and extra-curricular activities is provided, with some very good initiatives aimed at enhancing learner experiences underway.
- Very good student-care structures are apparent; provision for students with special education needs (SEN) and planning for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) require re-structuring.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; while some very good practice was noted, didactic teaching approaches contributed to student passivity in a number of lessons.
- High expectations are set for student achievement; formative assessment practice is in need of development as a further support to students in realising their full potential.
- Good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous inspections and the school has a good capacity for improvement; the potential of the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process in developing practice is not yet fully realised.

Recommendations

- A core team should be established to support planning for teaching, learning and assessment of SPHE and relevant continuing professional development (CPD) should be accessed.
- Planning and provision for students with SEN should be re-structured in accordance with Circular 0014/2017 and an appropriate programme of CPD should be provided.
- To support the on-going distribution of leadership, school management, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, should review the operation of the specific leadership roles of the in-school management team to ensure all school needs are being met.
- The board should develop a strategic school plan and the effectiveness of the school's communication and consultation mechanisms should be reviewed.
- Teaching approaches which facilitate active learning and provide for highly effective differentiation and in-class assessment should be further developed; the potential of the SSE process in developing practice should be fully exploited.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of school management is good and the quality of leadership is satisfactory. Strategic leadership for some areas of educational provision requires development.

Leading learning and teaching

School management and staff are committed to providing a high quality education programme in a caring environment. They are actively promoting a culture of on-going improvement and collaboration in teaching and learning. Some very good initiatives are underway and a strategic approach to developing practice is evolving.

A number of committees are in operation, all tasked with developing teaching and learning in areas such as digital technology, reporting procedures and SSE themes. The teamwork dimension of this work is illustrative of good practice. Some good use is being made of practice-sharing events to develop teaching and learning in the school. There is a need to streamline this developmental work to optimise its impact on classroom practice and to make the change-management processes more sustainable. Given the number of committees currently in operation, an over-arching role for the recently-formed teaching and learning group should be considered to co-ordinate a cohesive approach to embedding highly effective classroom practice in a select number of key pedagogical priorities.

School management is very supportive of CPD and there is a culture of professional learning among staff. This is impacting positively on learner experiences in lessons. A more strategic approach to sharing practice from CPD would prove beneficial. The potential of teach-meet events and the SSE process in embedding highly effective practice should be considered further.

While all teachers are deployed in line with their expertise, some specialist gaps emerged during the evaluation, particularly in the areas of SEN and SPHE. The board of management should conduct an audit of staff training needs, and address the deficits identified.

A good range of programmes, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities is provided for students. Agricultural Science and Applied Mathematics are recent introductions to the senior cycle curriculum. It is good practice that options are generated based on student choice.

While the overall quality of planning and provision for curriculum programmes is good, a more collaborative and strategic approach to managing curriculum-related change is needed. Timetable provision for some subjects needs adjusting to ensure that all students have adequate access to their full range of subjects. The need to future-proof the curriculum through the introduction of additional subjects or short courses, and to enhance supports for students when selecting subjects emerged during the evaluation. The board should establish a curriculum advisory group to oversee strategic action planning for future curriculum provision.

School management and staff recognise the need to review the school's junior cycle curriculum in line with the Junior Cycle Framework. To date the focus has been on retro-fitting the revised subject specifications into the existing timetable and developing provision for Wellbeing. Further development work on the overall design of the school's revised Junior Cycle programme is required.

TY is a very popular programme providing a very good range of learning experiences. Good review procedures are apparent. Commendably, additional places have been provided to satisfy increasing student demand. The LCVP is offered and timetabled provision for the programme is good. There is scope to increase student uptake of LCVP. Consideration should be given to developing the profile of the programme with students and parents.

There is very good timetabled provision for SPHE, including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) but current teacher deployment practice needs review. Traditionally, form tutors are assigned the dual role of teaching SPHE and carrying out tutor duties, while year heads plan the SPHE programme. It was reported that the completion of tutor duties can impact on time for SPHE and the programme plans reviewed are underdeveloped. A core team should be established to support high quality planning for teaching, learning and assessment of SPHE. Relevant CPD should be accessed to support this work. The re-establishment of the wellbeing team should be considered to further develop the school's wellbeing programme and exploit the cross-curricular opportunities that exist between relevant subjects and the whole-school wellbeing activities currently in operation.

High expectations are set for student achievement and some positive trends in student attainment are noted. However, there is scope to develop robust evidence-based systems at year head and subject department levels to track and monitor learner outcomes. The development work currently underway at senior management level is illustrative of very good practice and should be finalised and implemented.

Attendance and punctuality have been a focus of the school's SSE process. While some good progress had been made, some concerns remain. The effectiveness of current interventions in terms of improving attendance and punctuality should be reviewed and a whole-school approach to addressing outstanding issues should be implemented.

Students expressed general satisfaction with the operation of the school's anti-bullying procedures and the code of behaviour. Students praised the effectiveness of the regular anti-bullying surveys. Evidence noted during the evaluation indicates that some finer details of the implementation of the existing code of behaviour and anti-bullying policies merit review.

Support for students with additional needs, including students for whom English is an additional language is fair. Management and relevant staff are aware that re-structuring is needed and some initial CPD has been accessed.

The deployment of the teaching resources for SEN is not in accordance with the revised resource allocation model. The planned interventions are not sufficiently aligned to meet individual students' needs. There is also a lack of clarity in the allocation of co-ordination duties and how team-teaching hours are going to be deployed. As a matter of priority, planning and provision for students with SEN should be re-structured in accordance with circular 0014/2017. An appropriate range of CPD which supports all staff in implementing the continuum of support in a highly-effective manner should be accessed.

The quality of student care is very good; all staff play a key role in supporting students' needs. The year head and form tutor system and the student-support team provide for a co-ordinated and tiered approach to supporting students' specific care needs. First-year students and their parents are well supported during the transition from primary schools. It is particularly commendable that school prefects play an active role in supporting students to settle into the school.

Managing the organisation

The board of management has a very good level of shared expertise and members work diligently to address school needs. Appropriate review mechanisms have been established in relation to child protection and anti-bullying procedures. In addition to the principal's report, and in keeping with the school's desire to develop a distributed leadership model, members of the middle-management team and student council have made presentations to the board. There is scope to extend this good practice and develop the boards' strategic leadership of teaching and learning.

While an agreed report is issued for teachers and parents after each board meeting, the report should be finalised as a part of the board meetings. The mechanisms for disseminating the report also need review. The trustees provide a very good level of advice and support to the school

community. The annual report submitted by the board to the Loreto Education Trust facilitates valuable reflective practice.

The board has overseen the updating and review of a number of policies and some good collaborative practice is evident. A number of policies particularly those relating to wellbeing and inclusion are in need of updating. The board regularly reviews its admissions policy and enrolment procedures. It would be worthwhile for the board to examine the selection criteria for enrolling students in the event of over-subscription. Procedures in relation to the admission of students with SEN need to be reviewed and aligned with the principles of the SEN resource allocation model.

The in-school senior and middle management teams have been expanded and deliberate efforts are being made to develop distributed leadership capacity. In 2017 two new deputy principals were appointed to the senior management team; all members are very committed and have good complementary skill sets. Initial roles and responsibilities have been agreed at senior and middle management levels, with some clear leadership roles supporting teaching and learning.

Questionnaire data indicate that the majority of teachers and parents agree that the school is well run and that the in-school management systems are effective. However, evidence gathered during the evaluation indicates a need to review and streamline the operation of specified leadership roles within the senior and middle management teams, in collaboration with staff, to ensure that all current school needs are met, and to facilitate highly effective distributed leadership practice. In addition, leadership roles in areas such as SEN and year heads need to continue to develop, to support evolving school systems.

The school buildings are generally well maintained and the board has overseen a number of improvement works. Specialist facilities for Art and PE, and traffic management systems require development. The building sub-committee should work with the trustees to progress these issues. To assist with on-going maintenance, the annual risk assessments completed by subject departments should inform the maintenance plan for each specialist area.

Leading school development

While some good strategic planning practice is apparent, there is a need to enhance whole-school strategic planning processes. Questionnaire findings indicate a significant need to enhance systems for garnering the views of parents, students and staff.

The board has identified a number of school improvement priorities and the senior management team has made good use of *Looking at Our Schools* to scope out other areas for development. On foot of this work a number of initiatives aimed at school improvement have been put in place. However, there is a need for more cohesion between the initiatives to maintain momentum and make the process sustainable. Whole-school priorities should be refined and ranked. The board should oversee the development of a strategic school action plan. *Looking at Our Schools* and the recently-launched Loreto document *Compass*, should inform this process.

Developing leadership capacity

Leadership roles are distributed at middle-management level and very good procedures have been established to enable post holders to review their work on an annual basis. Staff members work very well together and are committed to their work. It is very good practice that staff are afforded opportunities to lead initiatives. The school provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student-teachers and learners.

Evidence noted during the evaluation indicates a need to review the effectiveness of in-school communication and consultation mechanisms. While some very good practice is apparent in the organisation of in-school meetings, communication on some routine matters between staff and school management require review.

Leadership opportunities are provided for students through the prefect system, the student council and SSE surveys. There is scope to develop student leadership opportunities and further enhance the role of prefect. The school is welcoming of parents. A committed parent association is a valuable addition to the school.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good. While some very good practice was noted, didactic teaching approaches contributed to student passivity in a number of lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Teachers had high expectations for student achievement in all lessons. Classroom interactions were respectful and a very positive teacher-student rapport was evident. On occasion, poor student punctuality was noted, particularly after the morning break. A whole-school approach to managing punctuality is required.

Learning intentions were presented at the outset of almost all lessons. Highly-effective learning was noted where the learning intentions were discussed with students, consolidated and assessed. Learning was most successful where the teaching approaches used enabled students to make meaningful links with prior learning or their experiences. High quality student engagement was noted in lessons where the activities were suitably differentiated to accommodate the needs of all learners. In a number of lessons, there was scope to enhance the quality of learning through greater planning for differentiation, assessment and more use of student-led activities.

Learner experiences proved very effective when students took ownership of their learning. In some lessons, there was scope for students to be more challenged by the learning tasks, to think independently and to articulate their learning. Student copybooks indicated some very good use of graphic organisers and other note-making techniques to manage information, therefore preventing an over-reliance on transcribing notes. The further use of this approach to note-making, as opposed to note-taking, should be considered. This would enhance learners' understanding and support independent thinking.

In the majority of lessons, very good attention was placed on developing students' literacy skills. A vibrant print-rich display of subject-specific material and students' own work was evident in classrooms.

Highly effective student engagement was observed when a balance was achieved between teacher and student voice. However, a majority of lessons were teacher-led, leading to passive learners who had limited opportunity to engage deeply in meaningful learning. Teachers should reduce the level of instructional teaching and engage students more in the learning process. This will provide additional opportunities for teachers to assess learners' level of understanding.

In a few lessons, students' work was shared as exemplars so other learners could engage in constructive feedback and peer assessment. This provided for highly-effective learning. Exemplary practice was noted in a small number of lessons when students utilised success criteria to inform their judgements when completing self and peer-assessments. These strategies should be further embedded across the school.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Lessons were generally well prepared with a good range of resources developed in advance. Highly-effective lessons moved at a suitable pace and the material was pitched at a level appropriate to all

students' needs. In a few lessons, there was some scope to refine the sequence of planned lesson tasks to provide for more effective incremental and developmental learning.

The use of digital learning technologies (DLT) was observed in the majority of lessons, most frequently as a tool for teachers to present material. In a few lessons, students and teachers made good use of a virtual learning environment to collaborate and share work. Teachers should extend the use of DLT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. This would facilitate greater student engagement in lessons and move away from the current practice of over-relying on text book material to inform students' learning.

In the majority of lessons, there was scope for enhanced differentiated teaching approaches to support the full range of learning styles and to meet specific learning needs of individual students. Therefore, teaching approaches that facilitate highly-effective differentiation should be developed.

Formative assessment practices were under developed in the majority of lessons observed. There was scope for a greater balance between teacher input and productive student participation and response. Teacher questioning was the main form of assessment and was most effective when there was a balance between global and direct questions, and when students had to apply information and develop their own answers. In the majority of lessons, global questioning was favoured and this was not as successful in engaging students. Formative assessment strategies should be extended to provide for a deeper assessment of students' understanding and progress in lessons. Greater use of higher-order questions with appropriate wait time is recommended. There is also a need for teachers to develop students' understanding of how to improve and develop their learning.

Homework was assigned in all lessons observed and students' journals indicate that homework is assigned regularly. As many of the class groups are of mixed ability, the need for differentiated homework activities could be further explored. There is scope to develop a consistent whole-school approach to correcting students' work, to include written feedback. While some high quality formative feedback was noted in student copybooks, there is scope to extend this practice. A review of copybooks during the evaluation showed that teachers orally correct a lot of work during class and students mark the completed work as "corrected in class" with a date. The effectiveness of this approach needs to be re-considered. Strategies that facilitate more effective student engagement with feedback should be implemented.

The overall quality of teachers' collaborative practice is good. Subject departments meet regularly and some good reflective practice was noted in their planning documentation. Subject teams have made very good progress in developing feedback comments for use on the revised school-report template to guide students' learning.

Overall, the quality of subject and programme plans reviewed was good, with some very good practice evident. In a few instances, there was an over-reliance on text books in planning. Best practice was evident in the subject plans that aligned incremental learning intentions with specific teaching and learning and assessment strategies.

Some subject teams use the outcomes of an analysis of student attainment to develop subject-specific action plans to support on-going development in teaching and learning. This very good practice should be extended to all subject teams.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous inspections.

Leadership and Management

School management and subject departments have made good progress in developing student-support structures and collaborative planning practices.

Timetable provision for Physical Education (PE) is very good and is being developed in accordance with the advice provided in a previous subject inspection of PE. However, arrangements for LCVP students to access PE still needs to be considered. TY students have a weekly Guidance lesson but Leaving Certificate students have limited access to timetabled Guidance. This needs to be addressed in accordance with the advice provided in a previous subject inspection of Guidance.

Teaching and Learning

Subject teams are making good progress in developing their practice in accordance with previous recommendations. Recommendations in relation to formative assessment, differentiation and the development of critical thinking skills still need to be fully realised. The potential for a robust SSE process to embed highly effective practice in these teaching and learning practices should be considered.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Very good structures are in place to support the school's SSE process. A strategic evidence-based approach to improvement is developing. Five SSE themes are currently being progressed in the school and some good use was made of data to inform this work. There is scope to review some of the targets set to ensure that they are specific, measurable, achievable and realistic. This will ensure that each SSE cycle is strategic and robust in developing highly-effective classroom practice.

To make planning for on-going improvement sustainable, there is a need for greater coherence between the SSE themes. Therefore, systems which facilitate the monitoring and review of targets need development to ensure that outcomes from one cycle of SSE can inform the direction of subsequent themes, thus making the process more manageable.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a good capacity for improvement. Leadership roles need to continue to evolve to ensure that the distributed leadership model being developed proves very effective in supporting on-going school improvement. Staff, parents and students are very committed to the school and a collaborative approach to school development is a key component of the school improvement agenda.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board was disappointed that there was inadequate recognition of the work and steps taken to implement the recommendations of previous reports.

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 school has commenced implementation of the recommendations with a committed and positively engaged staff.

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;