

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

School name	Royal School Cavan
School address	College Street Cavan County Cavan
Roll number	61080S

Date of Evaluation: 09-11-2017



What is whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning?

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

How to read this report

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

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

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

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	7 th , 8 th , 9 th November 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with acting principal and acting 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

Royal School Cavan is a co-educational Church of Ireland day and boarding fee-paying secondary school. Current enrolment is 218; the ratio of male to female students is quite even, approximately a quarter are boarders. The school provides the Junior Certificate, compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate. The senior management team was in an acting capacity for the 2017/18 school year.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Leadership of learning and teaching is very good; some management areas, largely administrative, need to be improved.
- The acting senior management team's leadership and management are very good; there is a clear focus and strategy for developing improvements in learning and teaching.
- Enterprise education is very strong and supports the case for considering introducing the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good, most lessons showed very effective practice; a significant minority were satisfactory or fair.
- Recommendations from previous evaluations have been addressed well; the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and capacity for improvement can become very good provided the review stage is implemented.

Recommendations

- The school should extend the scope of lesson observation that is to be introduced under the Droichead programme, in order to develop teaching and learning best practices.
- The phasing out of the eight-subject Leaving Certificate should be used as an opportunity to introduce LCVP which would accommodate a broader range of aptitudes than the Leaving Certificate.
- Special educational needs (SEN) resources should be used for their intended purpose and deployed in line with circular 0014/2017.
- Students should be encouraged to develop and expand on their answers to teacher questioning and be challenged more often with higher-order questions.
- The arrangements for access to one-to-one meetings with the guidance department for senior-cycle students should be reviewed and improved.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1 QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The acting senior management team's leadership of learning and teaching is very good. A number of examples of distributed leadership are operating well in planning teams. Some management areas, largely administrative, need to be improved.

Acting senior management has a clear focus and strategy for developing improvement and creativity in learning and teaching. Teachers are strongly encouraged to provide an active learning experience in classrooms. There is wide support for these developments among the teachers, over half of whom now pilot new classroom approaches under the Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century (TL21) project. The acting principal is the main driver of the school's participation in this initiative and leads the current TL21 cycle 2017-19. The school participates actively in continuing professional development teacher workshops, in collaboration with other schools.

Initially, a nucleus group of teachers trialled strategies, reviewed and adjusted them collaboratively and presented on their experiences to the full teaching staff. The strategies were mainstreamed in the following school year. This approach is consistent with good SSE practices. Inspectors' observation of lessons showed that assessment for and of learning strategies, outlined in the 2017-18 plan for learning and teaching, were being implemented. A template, guided by success criteria, helped students better assess the quality of their own and their peers' work and to implement feedback from teacher comments. These developments are a very positive indicator of the development of a learning community.

The school has registered for the Droichead programme for newly qualified teachers which will introduce a degree of lesson observation. As the programme develops the school should extend lesson observation to the teaching staff generally in the interests of developing best practices.

A broad curriculum is provided; fourteen examination subjects are timetabled in junior cycle and fifteen at Leaving Certificate. The TY programme combines a majority of familiar subjects with evolving modules that develop life skills, the arts and social awareness. However, for its next curriculum review, particularly of the senior-cycle programme, the school should reflect on the very low ratings shown in parent questionnaire responses on the level of advice provided when students were choosing subjects.

The phasing out of the eight-subject Leaving Certificate programme presents a good opportunity to introduce LCVP which would accommodate a broader range of aptitudes than the Leaving Certificate range of subjects permits. This is particularly the case where enterprise education is very strong and where students participate in enterprise competitions with considerable success. The enhanced value of the LCVP programme for admission to third-level courses and the increased proportion of students nationally whose results in LCVP examinations help to secure entry to third level are worth noting. The case for seriously considering introducing LCVP is strengthened by the combinations of subjects currently on offer in the school.

The mission statement claim of an inclusive school is reflected in the level of SEN resources allocated. The school's use of these resources must be better managed however, and all must be used for their intended purpose in line with circular 0014/2017. SEN resources are used in timetabling mainstream classes in the current year and this practice is not in keeping with the requirements of the new resource allocation model.

The quality of care for students is good; weekly meetings of senior management with year heads, SEN leaders and boarding staff provide a good picture of student welfare and needs. The new mentoring programme for senior prefects with first-year students was commended by students from both age groups. Weekly senior management formal meetings do not currently include the care team; the intention to restore the care team to the schedule should be delivered as soon as possible.

The guidance department includes very well-qualified personnel particularly in the area of personal counselling. The guidance plan includes a good account of student supports but should be more precise as to who does what. The guidance counsellor is not timetabled for sixth-year guidance classes. This is not good practice and will cease with the current sixth-year cohort. There were conflicting accounts of ease of access to one-to-one meetings with the guidance department for current sixth-year students. These arrangements should be reviewed and improved.

Competitive and participative sports feature prominently in the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for students. The absence of Physical Education (PE) from the third and sixth-year timetables is unsatisfactory. The rollout of the school's wellbeing programme will see PE provided to both year groups from next year. The parents' association has a considerable involvement in fundraising to build a sports hall that the school community identifies as an urgent need.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and relationships and sexuality education (RSE) programmes are well established on the junior-cycle curriculum and in TY. Wellbeing has been introduced in fifth year. Parents surveyed indicated a high awareness of the details of the RSE policy.

Student attendance was recorded consistently in all lessons observed and attendance was high. Data forwarded to TUSLA, however, showed levels of absence that were a concern. Poor procedures at school level inflated the absentee data. Attendance data returned to TUSLA must be accurate.

Managing the organisation

School governance is good. Board of management meetings are regular and well attended. Acting senior management has drafted a schedule of policies for early review; this new development will provide the board with regular input into key areas in the operation of the school. The good practice has begun of publishing an agreed report on board meetings.

The current board has considered fundamental issues for the future direction of the school. Training for some board members, however, was planned late in the board's term of office. Training for members should be accessed at the earliest date possible.

Acting senior management shows very good capacity in managing the school and enjoys strong support among all partners. Almost all parents surveyed indicated that the school was well run as did all teachers who completed the survey. The quality of communications, openness and trust between acting senior management and staff is very good. Good staff relations were evident.

Teachers are deployed in all cases in line with qualifications. The well-designed timetable supports learning, with a very good distribution of subjects throughout the week and regular contact for students with the subjects.

Leading school development

Acting senior management has put together a very good-quality school development plan with identified priorities for the short, medium and long term. There is a helpful roadmap for 2017-18, the term of office for the acting senior management team. Actions to enhance learning and teaching strongly dominate. Its strength lies in the collaborative approach to its design in which the acting principal took a lead role. The process of identifying priorities reflects SSE best practice.

Developing leadership capacity

There was strong evidence of leadership capacity being developed among teaching staff and students. The acting senior management team's ability to identify mistakes made in the initial implementation of school improvement plans showed them to be reflective about their own practice.

Middle management plays an important leadership role in the school. Year heads and staff members generally played significant roles in the planning teams whose work influenced the 2017-18 focus on literacy, numeracy, assessment for learning, wellbeing, implementing the new junior cycle, working towards a whole-school approach to teaching, learning and assessment, school vision and formalising a student prefect system.

Child Protection Procedures

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools.

2 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good, most lessons showed very effective practice. A significant minority of lessons were satisfactory or fair where areas for improvement were identified.

Students were on task in the majority of lessons. Teachers' preparation in most cases was very good; resources, materials and equipment were used to engage students. There was worthwhile use of demonstration and modelling, presentations and well-designed worksheets. Media clips were used in a number of lessons to stimulate discussion. This resource was most effective where students were given pre-identified tasks to challenge them to analyse content. Greater use should be made of this strategy.

The good practice of sharing learning intentions was implemented in almost all lessons providing students with a clear understanding of what they should know or be able to do. Revisiting these intentions in order to gauge progress in learning was evident in a significant minority of lessons. This simple strategy if more widely adopted would assist in consolidating learning.

The strategy of sharing success criteria worked well. It gave students a high input into the learning process through the range of collaborative strategies or the opportunities for personal reflection. This was particularly effective where tasks were differentiated and accessible to all levels of ability.

Interactions between teachers and students were very positive and a supportive, respectful atmosphere prevailed in most lessons. Teachers circulated well, affirmed students' efforts, provided support and checked progress.

A stimulating learning environment was provided in the majority of lessons, including a focus on subject-specific terminology and developing literacy and numeracy. A few rooms were laid out for collaborative learning which provided opportunities to display completed work. This facility enabled students to develop as independent learners and take more ownership of their work. This approach

would help students to prepare for Junior Cycle classroom based assessments (CBAs) and should be further used.

Students showed a high level of engagement in asking and answering questions and were in most cases confident and knowledgeable. There were instances where students should have been provided with more encouragement to expand on their answers. Good-quality questioning strategies that included higher-order questions with appropriate wait-time was seen in a small minority of lessons; this is an aspect of classroom practice to be developed.

Good routines were evident in student notebooks with examples of students being asked to make notes in a small number of lessons and phrase key points in their own words. This very good strategy facilitated higher-order thinking.

In second language lessons, there was good use of the target language for communication and instruction. Best practice was observed where the experience of language immersion challenged students to express themselves in the target language. This led to greater levels of engagement but was not uniform practice.

Students had opportunities to work collaboratively in most lessons. In some instances, this practice involved teachers encouraging students to assess the work of other students. A more structured approach to group work that included effective student peer-to-peer feedback would further develop students' learning skillset.

Students' work that is high quality should be used more widely both as exemplars for the class in general and as a focus for active constructive feedback. This exemplary practice was observed in a few lessons where spot demonstrations, student-led learning and sample approaches from past learners were provided. Identifying and affirming good-quality students' work is key to preparing them for self-assessment.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers had prepared very well for lessons. Highly effective lessons were well structured and ensured that students were challenged by a range of tasks. The pitch and pace of these lessons were suitably set and enhanced in most cases by very good classroom management.

Effective strategies were used in many lessons to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills. The best outcomes were seen where teachers ensured students understood and used the relevant key terminology in classroom discussions. Good practice observed included the use of key words, place-mat exercises and mind maps.

Student homework journals and copybooks indicated that homework is assigned and corrected regularly. The further embedding of assessment-for-learning (AFL) strategies in the correction of students' work would develop students' ownership of their learning more. In most lessons students received oral feedback on their work. It is advisable that teachers direct students to take note of suggestions and to follow-up on improving their work.

The quality of planning across subject departments varied; most were in the range from satisfactory to good, a minority were very good. All subject plans reviewed contained a record of student attainment in certificate examinations and comparisons with national norms. Highly effective practice was evident in a small number of planning folders where schemes of work have been

developed which align learning outcomes, methodologies, literacy and numeracy and assessment, to each topic.

The uptake at higher level in both junior and senior cycle is good overall and the outcomes from certificate examinations are provided to all subject departments.

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

The school has paid very good attention to addressing recommendations from previous evaluations very well and in a whole-school manner, even where inspections arose in individual subject departments.

Teaching and Learning

The care shown to addressing recommendations within subject departments and on a whole-school basis is very good. Previous reports have been analysed for common themes of best practice; the best outcome has been management's willingness to take on leadership of learning and teaching.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

There is good familiarity with almost all stages of the SSE process, the review stage needs to be implemented in the combined school improvement plan (SIP) on literacy and numeracy. This plan should be revisited, separated into two distinct plans and implemented in line with the six-step process, including board ratification.

The ability to reflect on and learn from previous mistakes is a good indicator of robust self-review. The initial TL21 pilot project on empowering second-year students as learners brought the realisation that the students needed more support; this approach was used in the next project on effective use of feedback through success criteria that guided students' evaluative skills.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

There is very good capacity for school improvement; collaboration with other schools has developed professional dialogue. Staff meetings routinely include sharing experiences of implementing new classroom strategies with the aim of improving learning and teaching.

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 Royal School Cavan welcomes the extremely positive and affirming WSE-MLL report. We are delighted that the report both acknowledges and validates the commitment and hard work of all stakeholders. In particular, we are pleased with the following findings:

- Leadership of teaching and learning is very good.
- The acting senior management team's leadership and management is very good, with a clear focus and strategy for developing improvements and creativity in learning and teaching.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good, most lessons showing very effective practice.
- The strong evidence of leadership capacity being developed among teaching staff and students.

All of the above findings affirm our school's commitment to providing excellence in learning and teaching so that our students develop an appreciation of lifelong learning through the use of innovative pedagogical practices. It also affirms the atmosphere of mutual respect which pervades the school.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board of Management acknowledges the recommendations made in the report and is committed to acting on them and to the ongoing development of Royal School Cavan:

- A curriculum review will be carried out at senior cycle in the school year 2018-2019 to investigate the opportunities for introducing Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP).
- Special educational needs will be deployed in line with Circular 0014/2017 for the school year 2018-2019.
- Effective questioning will form part of our School Improvement Plan 2018-2019.
- Unfortunately for this school year 2017/18, Guidance could not be allocated a period on the Form 6 timetable as this cohort of students is the final group to study an eight-subject Leaving Certificate. The guidance department has effective arrangements in place for one-to-one meetings with Form 6 students, however significant numbers of students do not accept these appointments because they do not want to be absent from their classes.
- The *Droichead* programme is running very successfully in the school this year with three newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and three permanent staff teachers engaging in this process.

As stated above, the Board of Management is very pleased with this most positive report and intends to use the recommendations to further serve the needs of our students in accordance with our Mission Statement.

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;