

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Newbridge College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newbridge Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61680T

Date of Evaluation: 04-10-2018



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	04-10-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Board of Management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus-group interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with parents • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Newbridge College, is a co-educational voluntary fee-charging secondary school committed to providing a Catholic education in the Dominican tradition. The school offers the junior cycle, the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate to its 895 students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is of a very high quality; however the composition of the board requires attention.
- A broad curriculum is provided and a wide range of subjects is offered to students, with some scope for improvement in a minority of subject areas.
- A significant strength of the school is the commitment of staff and the opportunities devolved to them by senior management to lead and participate in continuing professional development (CPD).
- There is excellent whole-school support for students' well-being.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons was good or very good: in a few lessons scope for improvement was noted.
- Very good progress has been made with some of the recommendations arising from previous inspection reports.
- The school has engaged very positively with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and has excellent capacity to reflect on their work and to implement a school improvement agenda

Recommendations

- A board of management should be established in line with the Articles of Management of a voluntary secondary school; this board should then oversee the development of an overarching school plan and further strengthen their role in teaching, learning and student attainment.
- In the context of a curriculum review, school management should ensure timetabled Physical Education (PE) for all fifth- and sixth-year students and increase the time allocation to the LCVP link modules.
- In lessons where scope for improvement is required, teachers should use learning intentions that are student-friendly to structure lessons, integrate more student-centred approaches and provide developmental written feedback in students' copybooks.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The principal and deputy principals form the senior management team (SMT): they are supported by the board and provide very effective leadership of teaching and learning in the school.

The SMT is highly commended for their commitment to ongoing improvement of teaching and learning in a partnership of collaboration and devolved leadership. They empower staff to lead initiatives in learning and teaching with very high participation among all staff in these initiatives.

A number of subcommittees have been established and the CPD events have been used to promote teaching and learning initiatives. To ensure that the learning from all initiatives is garnered and embedded into class practice it is timely that a cohesive plan be developed, where successful teaching and learning can be identified allowing for further embedding of these best practices into all lessons.

There is excellent engagement by the school staff with the Initial teacher education programmes as demonstrated in the establishment of a professional support team to assist work in this area. All members of the team have been trained with the National Induction Programme for Teachers and clear roles and induction processes have been developed and documented with the school's Staff Handbook. Newly appointed or inducted staff are very well supported through the teacher mentoring programme and this demonstrates the staff collegial approach taken within the school.

The school's mission statement of promoting the holistic development of the students is clearly demonstrated through the school's formal and informal curriculum. A broad curriculum is provided and a wide range of subjects are offered to students. A year-long taster programme is offered to students on entry to the school resulting in a few of the optional subjects timetabled for one class period per week. The overall impact of such a provision on student attainment and the incremental development of skills and subject knowledge should be reviewed in the context of an overall curriculum review. It is also recommended that provision be made on the school's timetable for PE for all fifth- and sixth-year students. The establishment of a curriculum review body that would provide advice and support to management in these areas should be considered.

The TY programme offers students a balance of academic and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Overall the programme is very popular and demand has increased for participation in the programme. As the demand for the LCVP has decreased, the promotion of the programme has been prioritised. However, additional time should be allocated to the link modules as per programme requirements.

An impressive and varied range of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities are in place to support and enhance student learning. There have been many successes in all areas. Staff are to be highly commended for their efforts that facilitate students' personal development beyond the classroom.

Appropriate provision is made for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). The RSE policy is prioritised for review this year and this should allow for the school to remind parents about the policy.

Overall student support is excellent and is enhanced by a pastoral care policy where roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined. The school benefits from the services of a school matron and the availability of two chaplains from the Dominican order. The school's support team (formally the Pastoral Care team) meets weekly and is very well supported by relevant deans for each year group and the Special Education Needs (SEN) department. The majority of students surveyed were very positive about feeling safe and cared for in the school.

Guidance provision is very well organised in the school. The guidance service team is represented on many of the student support teams in the school. External counselling expertise is accessed as necessary to support that provided by the in-school team.

In addition to the pastoral needs of students, commendably school staff volunteer to act as coaches to support academic improvements for those students who may not be reaching their full academic potential. Although in the early stages of implementation this initiative is proving very positive.

Support for students with SEN is very well organised and supported by management within the school. A draft SEN policy has been developed and systems established to track students' progress have been introduced in line with the new continuum of support. One-to-one, small group settings or more recently through in-class support are the models of provision used for SEN support. The number of teachers deployed to provide the majority of SEN support has been reduced to a core team of teachers however, there is still further scope to reduce the number of teachers in this team.

Managing the organisation

The school is managed by a board of governors (the board) which comprises fourteen members, the majority of whom are Dominican Trustees. It is recommended that a board of management be formed in line with the articles of management of a voluntary secondary school and the Education Act (1998).

The board oversees the operation of the school in an effective and pro-active manner and uses their collective expertise to very good effect. It is aware of statutory obligations and is committed to ensuring that legislative requirements are met, including developing and implementing required policies.

Minutes of board meetings indicate involvement in the development of a new schedule of posts of responsibility and in policy development. More recently much of the board's work relates to financial matters including a very successful and extensive infrastructural development and refurbishment of the school. Going forward the board should further develop its role in the teaching and learning and student outcomes particularly at junior cycle.

A relatively new SMT is in place and they share a common vision in terms of school management. They work very well together in a complementary, collegial and supportive manner and are dedicated to school improvement and development. They meet regularly and have dedicated meetings pertaining to school business.

SMT supported by the board of governors and key staff provides very effective management of the school. The very positive responses by parents, teachers and students attest to the effectiveness of school management.

The principal is very committed to school improvement and takes an active role in all aspects of the school life, from meeting prospective students to coaching rugby. The two deputy principals are very effective and share responsibilities for many areas of school management and leadership, increasingly their roles are becoming more delineated and defined.

A review of the post of responsibilities has taken place recently. The new post structure will need time to become embedded for the full potential of the structure to be realised. The board funds a dean system within the school to support the post of responsibilities. The role of the deans is acknowledged by all as very positive in the overall management of students.

The board communicates with all partners via an agreed report which is available to teaching staff and the parents association. To further enhance the boards' communication with all partners, receiving inputs at board meetings from staff and students should be considered

An excellent school website provides up-to-date news about school events, extra-curricular and co-curricular successes and hosts curriculum information. The school's electronic software system is used extensively to record attendance, student behaviour and more recently the introduction of an online eDiary to further enhance communication with home. In addition text, email and school reports are also used as means to communicate with parents.

The code of behaviour has been developed based on Respect, Empathy, Safety, Pride, Excellence, Co-operation and Truth (RESPECT). The Deans, pastoral care team and support staff involved with students are central to the highly effective day-to-day management and care of students. The planned review of the policy this year should allow for positive impacts of initiatives and other strategies, including restorative practice, to be more explicitly noted.

The recent improvement and upgrading of the schools' infrastructure to a very high standard enhances the learning environment for staff and students. Specialist rooms are well resourced, equipped and maintained. Very good information and communication technologies (ICT) facilities are available throughout the school. In addition to their use in supporting the teaching and learning in lessons they are used to facilitate collaboration among staff.

Overall, management deploys teachers with a view to optimising their subject qualifications, there is however, some scope to identify areas for further recruitment needs.

Very good links have been developed between the school, local industries, organisation, universities and a local post-primary school to enhance teaching and learning for students in the school. The school has been awarded an Amber Flag and is in the process of working towards a Green Flag.

Leading school development

All essential elements that constitute a school plan were presented during the evaluation including mandatory policies, areas for development and curricular plans. The board should make provision for the collation of an overarching document to provide a cohesive structure to a school plan and share it with the school community. The recent appointment of a post of responsibility for school development is welcomed and should facilitate the establishment of a schedule to allow for the cyclical review of school policy development to be included in the school plan.

The board identified short to medium term priority areas in curriculum review, engaging with Digital learning through the SSE process and further development of a school wide academic tracking system. The school is well placed to progress these priorities as the restructuring of the post of responsibilities has enabled the school to link these priorities with some of the new post descriptors.

The school engages very positively with parents by gathering their voice during, for example, policy development and the collection of their views for SSE baseline data. Very good opportunities are provided to parents to participate and support the school via the parents' association

Developing leadership capacity

The SMT works very effectively to promote the development of leadership capacity of the staff and students in the school. Staff are encouraged to take on leadership roles and are supported by the board in this regard.

Staff described feeling empowered, trusted and valued in the work that they do and as members of school community. The levels of volunteerism among staff in the school is very high and commitment to school improvement is excellent.

Team work is highly valued by senior management as evidenced in the number of task groups that work collaboratively to support school improvement. The collaboration between the school and a local post-primary school is noted as a positive development where staff have sought the support and advice to enhance learning in the school. The "teach meet" initiative demonstrates teachers' commitment to sharing of in-house expertise among colleagues.

An audit of teachers' CPD needs was undertaken and key actions arising from this survey are being used to enhance staff in-service. Very high levels of engagement by teachers with national in-service and further studies or initiatives, including engagement with Droichead, Cosán, TL21 and teachers will soon participate in the Instructional Leadership Programme. Participation in such initiatives is for example mutually beneficial to teachers' practice and ongoing school improvement in teaching and learning.

The student voice is valued by school management, their views and insights are requested in many areas to support programme evaluation, school policies and as part of SSE. A wide range of leadership opportunities are in place for student and have been enhanced by the introduction this year of Meitheal.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning observed ranged from good to very good; a minority of lessons had scope for improvement specifically regarding the integration of student-centred approaches in lessons. Many lessons were characterised by instances of excellent practice.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Learner experiences were positive and students were engaged in their learning. In many lessons, students were motivated by teachers using students' interests and real-life experiences to set up the learning.

In the best lessons learning intentions were shared in a student-friendly manner and explained at the beginning of lessons, revisited to assess students' progress and were linked with prior learning. In many instances learning intentions were too general or only served to structure lessons. The planned intentions should be sufficiently differentiated to challenge all learners and time should be taken to review the progress made.

Some good examples of pair and group work were observed and were characterised by clear instructions, specific timeframes and individual roles assigned. In these lessons, ample time was given to facilitate student feedback. In some lessons, a more structured approach to student collaboration would further enhance the effectiveness of such collaborative learning opportunities.

On occasion student passivity was observed and was due to an overemphasis on teacher delivery and this should be rebalanced with purposeful activity from students.

In language lessons, effective learning was evident where students had the opportunity to hear and speak the target language. In these lessons, there was extensive use of the target language by teachers and students alike. There was some scope to increase in the use of the target language for routine instructions and conversations. The creation of learning activities that facilitate students' oral language development which should be extended to all lessons.

Very good practice was observed where students were facilitated to ask and to answer questions, while in other lessons, questioning focused too much on lower-level recall-type answers. The practice of using questioning strategies that develop students' critical thinking skills is encouraged. Developing the student voice should be considered and opportunities for students to share and showcase their own learning during lessons should be facilitated.

Learner outcomes were either good or very good in most lessons. In these lessons, students demonstrated very high levels of understanding and engagement and had opportunities to engage actively in their learning.

There were many examples of subject-specific key words to enhance literacy development. There is scope for greater attention to be given to developing numeracy needs of students.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers' individual practice was mostly good or very good with instances of excellent practice observed in many lessons. Teaching practice was underpinned by teachers having a very good knowledge of their students and of their interests and abilities. The majority of teachers had prepared very well for lessons. Highly effective lessons were well structured and ensured that students were challenged by a range of tasks.

In all lessons, very good relationships between teachers and students were observed. In many lessons students were challenged appropriately while in some there was scope for students to do more and to be challenged to achieve as learners.

High expectations were evident in lessons which supported student engagement. In many lessons, teachers used their subject expertise and their own enthusiasm to create rich learning opportunities for students.

In many lessons assistance was given to students experiencing difficulties and teachers demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of SEN students. However, wider use of differentiated teaching methodologies that allow students to work at their own pace and that challenge the more able students is encouraged across all departments.

Homework was regularly set and monitored in most lessons. Very valuable peer-evaluation activities were utilised in some lessons with evidence of teachers providing high-quality oral feedback to students. The provision of regular, constructive and developmental written feedback in students' copybooks remains an area for development for the school.

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning was mainly in the use of presentations to teach particular topics. Audio and visual clips were also used effectively in some lessons and in a few lessons, teachers uploaded their class notes and presentations for students to consult at home.

A collaborative approach is taken to subject department planning with good progress noted in the development of subject plans. The move to an on-line system will allow a more efficient sharing of resources. Some very good examples were observed with regard to learning outcomes and action planning. This approach should be adopted over time, across all subject plans.

Overall, the outcomes for students in certificate examinations is of a high standard with many achieving very favourably in the vast majority of subjects. A more thorough analysis of student attainment data in both summative assessments and certificate examinations should be undertaken to enhance and support ongoing planning for improvement.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Overall very good progress was made implementing the recommendations from previous inspection reports and a whole-school evaluation conducted in 2010. An increase in allocation of time to both History and Geography at junior cycle has been achieved and in-house CPD events have been arranged to facilitate the sharing of best practice in teaching. The preparation of an overarching school plan should now be prioritised.

Teaching and Learning

Some good progress has been made in subject specific recommendations, including the use of common assessment and the sharing of common planning templates. There is further scope for the provision of formative feedback as highlighted in previous reports and again in this report.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school has engaged very positively with the school SSE process. Baseline data has been gathered from staff, parents and students, subcommittees have been established and action plans developed and strategies enacted. In addition to the theme of literacy, numeracy and collaborative learning the school will focus on wellbeing in this academic year. The school improvement plan has been developed and uploaded on the website and identifies ways in which parents can support their students in each of the themes.

Ongoing adjustments have been made to strategies identified to support each of the themes. It may be necessary to further refine some initiatives to support their embedding into teaching and learning practices.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has adapted to ongoing school improvement and change. There is very effective leadership at board and senior management level that empowers staff to take leadership roles within the school. There is very good commitment by staff and parents to the school and students feel part of a community and appreciate the opportunities that they are presented with by the school.

Overall the school has excellent capacity to reflect on its work and to implement a school improvement agenda.

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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Governors welcomes this very positive and affirming WSE-MLL report and is pleased that it identifies and highlights many of the key strengths of Newbridge College. The Board would like to acknowledge the positives identified in the report and the many areas of effective practice in the College. In particular the Board notes the following:

- The very high quality of leadership and management.
- The broad curriculum provided across a wide range of subjects that is offered to students.
- The commitment of staff and the opportunities devolved to them by senior management to lead and participate in continuing professional development which was identified as a significant strength of the school.
- The excellent whole-school support for students' well-being and the excellent student support provided.
- The quality of teaching and learning identified as good or very good in the majority of lessons.
- That many lessons were characterised by instances of excellent practice.
- The very good progress made with a number of the recommendations arising from previous inspection reports.
- The very positive engagement of the College with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
- The excellent capacity of the College staff to reflect on their work and to implement a school improvement agenda.
- The majority of students surveyed were very positive about feeling safe and cared for in the school.
- The school's mission statement of promoting the holistic development of the students is clearly demonstrated through the school's formal and informal curriculum.

Area 2 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 acknowledges the positive findings and recommendations made in the report and are committed to acting on them and to the ongoing strategic development of Newbridge College. Work to address the recommendations made has already commenced.

- The term of the current Board of Governors ends in October 2019 and it has recommended to the Trustees the establishment of a Board of Management in line with the Articles of Management for Catholic Secondary Schools for the 2019/2020 academic year. The current Board of Governors and the new Board will oversee the development of an overarching school plan and this work has already commenced. The Board notes that all the essential elements that constitute a school plan were presented during the evaluation including mandatory policies, areas for development and curricular plans.
- The planning process of introducing Physical Education as part of the curriculum for fifth and sixth year students has started and this will be rolled out in August 2019. This will operate in conjunction with the already extensive extra-curricular and co-curricular physical activity programmes currently on offer. The time allocation for LCVP will also be examined.
- The Board also acknowledges the importance of using learning intentions that are student-friendly to structure all lessons and the use of student-centred approaches across the curriculum. This will include written feedback to students in copybooks.