

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Patrician Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newbridge Co Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61681V

Date of Evaluation: 16-01-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHOLE- 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- EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Date of inspection	16-01-2019
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

Patrician Secondary School is a post-primary school in Newbridge, Co. Kildare and operates under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Trust. It is an all-boys school with a current enrolment of 898 students. The school offers the junior cycle, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and an optional Transition Year (TY).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The senior management team is proactive, progressive and ambitious for the school and also provides very good leadership.
- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good; there is excellent engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) and sharing of good practice; though a more systematic approach to both would be beneficial to the ongoing improvements in the school.
- There is a very high level of commitment among staff to providing a wide range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.
- School management and staff are strongly committed to providing a supportive, caring learning environment; high expectations are set for student achievement but systems to track attainment need to be formalised.
- Learning tasks and activities that provided an appropriate balance of challenge and support, so that all students could reach their potential, were evident in some lessons but not all.
- There is significant capacity and enthusiasm among the staff at all levels to use reflective practices and measurable targets to achieve on-going school improvement using the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

Recommendations

- A formal system for tracking student attainment that involves inputs from year heads, subject teams and the students themselves should be implemented.
- Formal systems to share and embed effective classroom practice in differentiation and the use of written formative assessment should be established; the potential of the SSE process, in supporting this work, should be explored.
- A more systematic approach to teacher collaboration that supports identified areas of priority in teaching, learning and assessment should now take place.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management is very effective overall. There is considerable competence at all levels of leadership, and a strong shared commitment to the school's guiding vision.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership for learning is very good. The newly established senior management team works very effectively to promote a culture of continuous improvement in the school.

A key strength of the school is its committed and hardworking staff, among whom an exceptional level of volunteerism is evident in the provision of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities for students.

The full range of curricular programmes is offered in the school, while the range of subject options provided is very wide. Work is ongoing on the new area of Wellbeing. There is a high uptake of the optional TY programme which offers students opportunities to experience innovative learning opportunities, including work experience, trips away and the forging of links with the community through the Gaisce awards. A database of available centres for work experience opportunities is currently being developed in conjunction with other schools in the locality. The LCVP and LCA programmes offered are currently being progressed to maximise student learning potential. Commendably, an LCA review group has been initiated in the school.

An impressive transfer system is in place for incoming first years, supported by the guidance and special educational needs (SEN) teams. These include an annual 'Open Evening', and information evenings for parents. The school maintains close links with relevant primary schools to further support this important transitional stage.

Information evenings are also held for parents and students in the transition between junior and senior cycle. Time is set aside for subject teams to present on their subjects to support students in their transition to senior cycle. Assemblies for parents and students at the beginning of the school year further acts as an opportunity to disseminate information specific to particular year-groups. A very strong guidance team ensures students are well informed on career decisions as they progress through the school.

The school's ethos of inclusivity underpins the range of care supports available to students. Students' welfare needs are at the heart of the school and are regarded as a responsibility for all staff members. Enabling the students to feel part of a community in a happy, safe, supportive environment is the school's mission and its high priority. This was attested to by the board of management, senior management, staff, parents and students themselves. A number of worthy mental-health awareness initiatives are promoted and delivered with input from staff, students and outside agencies. The care team meets weekly to identify and support the needs of students. Senior management, year heads and the schools' chaplaincy further supports the delivery of care to all. Maintaining strong links with the parish and wider community through charity work and the John Paul II Awards further develop a sense of community for students.

The school is committed to supporting students with SEN and the support is planned very effectively, led by the SEN co-ordinator and a core team of qualified and experienced staff. Students, particularly in junior cycle, are regularly assessed to ascertain the need for additional support; individual targets are set; and there is very good monitoring and documenting of students' progress. A number of models of support are employed by the school including withdrawal for small group or one-to-one tuition as well as in-class support and team teaching. Priority should be given to scheduling a weekly

meeting with the core SEN team that includes representatives from the guidance team, senior management and the special-needs assistants' team. It is advised that the SEN core team, comprising of representatives from SEN, Guidance, SMT, SNA and resource schedule a weekly meeting and document discussions.

There is a positive and impressive culture of professional learning and collaboration among staff. This is evident in the many 'teach-meets' and peer-review practices, currently well established in the school. Such collaborative practice is supported by senior management and driven by the atmosphere of collegiality present in the school. However, these practices would benefit from a more strategic and developmental approach. The recently formed school self-evaluation (SSE) team could harness learning from the range of CPD opportunities undertaken, and from peer collaboration initiatives, and use the school's SSE process to embed effective practice in key pedagogical priorities.

High expectations are set for student achievement and the uptake at higher level in a number of subjects is on the increase. However, school management and staff recognise the need to use school attendance and attainment data more systematically to assist students to reach their full potential. Year-heads and assistant year heads, in conjunction with subject teams and students, should progress and implement a formalised system to track students' progress and set targets for improvement. This should be a key developmental priority.

Managing the organisation

The quality of governance is very good and the newly established board shows a deep commitment to the school. Minutes of board meetings reflect a focus on encouraging staff CPD and on child protection reporting. It is encouraging to see that this board seeks closer engagement with teaching and learning and is in the process of inviting subject teams to present at board meetings. The board also envisages closer engagement with attainment data, particularly from the certificate examinations, so that it can better see how improvement can be managed.

The board is well informed about curricular developments and on the post of responsibility review process. However, the development of a formalised checklist should be initiated to ensure the ratification and review of policies is maintained.

All teachers surveyed are very positive regarding the communication among staff and that the school is very well run. There is some indication that the board could improve its communication to teachers, and, encouragingly, the board is already exploring ways in which this can be achieved.

Management of the school facilities is very good, despite some restrictions regarding space on corridors and in some classrooms. Very good use is made of the school's website and social media outlets to communicate with the wider school community. Progress has been made in establishing digital learning supports and a digital learning plan is at its early stages.

The very good interpersonal relationships between staff and students is underpinned by positive behavioural management and restorative practices. The code of behaviour is currently under review to ensure it is more reflective of this.

Leading school development

Those in leadership and management roles are aware of the school's changing needs, and seek to respond to them. A strikingly high awareness of the Patrician ethos and vision was evident among all stakeholders, indicative of a shared understanding in the school. The senior management team is conscious of leading the school's values and of continuing to adapt its curriculum to ensure the development of the school, while linking with community needs and causes.

The school has a proactive parents' association which is very supportive of the school. Partnership with parents and with the wider community, including the parish and local businesses, is valued as a means of supporting students' learning. The school ensures good communication with parents through its website and through social media outlets, as well as through students' progress reports. In their responses to the parents' questionnaire, a high percentage of parents stated that they feel welcome in the school and agreed that there was a good atmosphere in the school.

Developing leadership capacity

The senior management team keeps up to date with evolving requirements and plans proactively for change. Teachers are empowered to take on leadership roles. This can be seen in the number of committees led by teachers with a focus on developing teaching and learning strategies and in the recent review of middle-management posts of responsibility. Commendably, it prioritised evidence of the specific teaching and learning needs of the school, along with the relevant circular and the quality framework *Looking at Our School 2016*. Maximising the contribution of middle management, specifically the role of the year head and assistant year head, will be vital to help school management continue to progress the school. To this end, a timetabled weekly meeting of senior management with year heads and assistant year heads should be scheduled. Key areas of punctuality, attendance, attainment, target setting and communication should be formalised and delineated to each role.

Teachers are seen, and see themselves, as leaders of learning, including their own learning. Teachers are supported in accessing CPD opportunities, and so are well placed to lead the development of teaching, learning and assessment.

The Droichead programme is firmly established in the school and it complements the supportive learning environment for all staff.

Student leadership is promoted through the democratically elected students' council. The council meets regularly and has the support of a liaison teacher. The students' council has the opportunity to be involved in relevant student policies and is actively involved in promoting mental health initiatives. Meitheal is newly established in the school and has potential to develop a network of peer-support for students. The Green School initiative provides a further opportunity for students to take on leadership roles.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning was either good or very good. There were many instances of excellent practice evident and some satisfactory elements in a small minority of lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

During the evaluation, the inspectors visited lessons across the range of curricular programmes and subjects provided in the school.

In almost all lessons, students were motivated to learn and engaged in respectful interactions which supported a positive learning environment. Student responses to questionnaires regarding the teaching in the school were also very positive.

Learning intentions were shared with students in many lessons which is good practice. However, in many cases, their purpose was interpreted by teachers as a 'to-do' list rather than as a means to involve the students in the learning process and in facilitating purposeful learner engagement. Highly effective learner outcomes were supported when the learning intentions were differentiated appropriately, phrased simply, and built on prior students' knowledge.

In the best lessons, very good student engagement was facilitated by the choice of meaningful and challenging learning activities, where students had opportunities to work collaboratively, ask questions and share their learning. At other times, the structure of the lesson was such that students had few opportunities for active participation. Consequently, there was an imbalance between teacher input and student activity, leading to students being more passive and less likely to contribute, sometimes leading to disengagement. Sufficient time should be allowed in all lessons for activities that encourage students to reflect on, discuss and apply their learning.

Brainstorming was used to good effect in some lessons, offering a way in which many students could contribute to lessons.

The quality of the learning environment was highly effective in many classrooms visited, particularly when teachers' arranged desks in a way that was conducive to student collaboration. In these classrooms, the celebration of students' work and the promotion of subjects with posters contributed to a positive and encouraging learning space.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The very positive relationships between teachers and students was very evident in almost all lessons observed. This was particularly evident when students were encouraged and affirmed. Teachers often modelled enthusiasm for their subject and evinced a passion for learning which directly impacted positive student engagement.

Individual teacher planning and preparedness was of a high standard across the school.

A very good emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary and key words was noted in many lessons which supported students' literacy development. Good practice was also noted in highlighting whole-school numeracy initiatives but in much fewer lessons. Further work is needed in this area.

Learning was of a high standard in lessons where teachers had an acute awareness of their students' needs and adapted the teaching approaches accordingly. This has particular resonance in the context of the mixed-ability cohort in the school. In many lessons, however, a whole-class approach to teaching and learning prevailed, with the same content delivered to all students, in the same way. In planning their lessons, teachers should differentiate learning opportunities to accommodate all students.

Some good oral formative assessment practices were noted. Questioning was a frequently used strategy to assess learning. Some good use of placemat activities, exit tickets and traffic lights was noted. In most lessons, teachers made very good use of oral formative feedback but regular and developmental written feedback in students' copybooks remains a significant area for development in the school.

Good use of information and communications technology (ICT) was a feature of many lessons, particularly online shared platforms. Teachers used ICT also to present information in an interesting way, using images and video clips to encourage student engagement in the topic.

Teachers' collaborative practice is well developed. Teachers value their role as leaders of learning and this is evident in the level of collaboration evident at team level. A range of subject department plans and schemes was reviewed during the evaluation. Long-term planning is of a high standard across most subject areas. Inconsistencies across subject teams regarding analysis and engagement with attainment data from the certificate examinations, provided by the senior management team, was in evidence. Strategic analysis of attainment data to inform improvements in teaching and learning practices should take place in every subject team.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The overall quality of implementation of recommendations from previous recommendations is very good.

Leadership and Management

The progress made in implementing previous recommendations in the area of leadership and management is very good. School management and subject teams have used previous inspections effectively to inform planning and management issues.

Teaching and Learning

Good progress has been made in implementing previous teaching and learning recommendations. Active learning methodologies were in evidence during the evaluation, but a more structured approach to student collaboration would maximise the learning potential and ensure there is a balance between teacher input and purposeful student activity. Similarly, elements of assessment for learning strategies were in evidence, most notably good questioning techniques; regular, written, developmental feedback on students' work remains an area for development.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The SSE process in the school has been reinvigorated of late by the formation of a new school self-evaluation team that will endeavour to embed SSE as a whole-school activity. Evidence of the focus on literacy was observed during many lessons, particularly in relation to subject-specific vocabulary. Very good procedures are in place for gathering baseline data but emphasis should now be given to how improvement could be generated and measured. The school should also ensure that a summary of its self-evaluation report and school improvement plan is available to the whole-school community. The SSE team should adopt a strategic approach when organising teach-meets and peer collaboration initiatives, and use the school's SSE process to embed effective practice in key pedagogical priorities.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The evidence accrued during the course of the evaluation indicates that the school has exemplary capacity to improve. Task groups and subject teams, supported by the senior management team, have led planning for improvement in literacy, numeracy, assessment and action planning for improvement. The expertise, professional capacity and shared vision of this school augurs well for future school improvement.

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

TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management, representing all stakeholders, welcomes the very positive and affirming WSE-MLL report and its findings. It identifies and highlights many of Patrician Secondary School's key strengths and its high level of commitment to the holistic development of all our students. The Board would like to acknowledge the many positives outlined in the report and the many areas of highly effective practice, in particular the following:

- The very effective and high quality of Leadership and Management that is proactive, progressive and ambitious for the school.
- A broad and balanced curriculum across a wide range of subjects.
- A dedicated, committed and hardworking staff, among whom an exceptional level of volunteerism is evident in the provision of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities for students.
- A positive and impressive culture of professional learning and collaboration among staff.
- A school which is strongly committed to providing a supportive, caring learning environment that sets high expectations for all areas of student achievement.
- A strikingly high awareness of the Patrician ethos and vision which is evident among all stakeholders. The school's ethos of inclusivity underpins a range of student care and welfare supports which enables all to feel part of a community in a happy, safe and supportive environment.
- The quality of teaching and learning identified as good or very good with many instances of excellent practice evident.
- Students are motivated to learn and engage in respectful interactions which support a positive learning environment.
- The exemplary professional capacity, expertise and shared vision within Patrician Secondary School which augers well for future school improvement.
- A school committed to supporting students with SEN and the effective planning of same.

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 Management acknowledges the recommendations made in the report and welcomes all inputs from the inspectorate that support the development and further improvement of teaching and learning at Patrician Secondary School. Work to address these recommendations has already commenced.

- A more formalised system of tracking student attainment is under investigation. This is supported by the appointment of an Academic Tracking Co-ordinator within our posts of responsibility with inputs from all stakeholders including Year Heads, Assistant Year Heads, Guidance Department, SEN Department, Subject Teams and the students themselves.
- The Board acknowledges the importance of differentiation and feedback to support teaching and learning in the classroom. Our SSE teams are now involved in promoting and developing formal structures to embed same.
- The Board recognises the commitment and willingness of teachers to engage in the schools Peer Collaboration process. The Peer Collaboration team have taken on board the recommendations made following our WSE-MLL and is currently putting in place systems to identify priorities of learning e.g. differentiation.