

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Cross And Passion College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilcullen Co Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61690W

Date of Evaluation: 28-09-2016



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject 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 accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	26- 28 September 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with Board of Management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Introduction

Founded in 1887, by the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, the school was originally a boarding school for girls. Since 1986 the school has become a co-educational voluntary secondary school. In 2009, the Cross and Passion College joined the Le Chéile Schools Trust, committed to Catholic Post-Primary education.

A broad curriculum is provided and includes; the Junior Certificate, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and a compulsory Transition Year.

The school is highly inclusive and opened a classroom for students who are on the autistic spectrum in 2012 with plans for a second class to open in 2017. In recent years, the school has experienced an increase in enrolment and has 768 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The board of management provides good quality leadership for the school.
- Senior management is a very effective leadership team.
- The current post structure does not meet the needs of the school and should be reviewed to support its ongoing development.
- Staff is afforded many opportunities to develop professionally and they demonstrate a strong commitment to the school.
- In the majority of lessons, learning and teaching were good or very good with some examples of exemplary practice.
- The school has very good capacity for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management should oversee a review of the posts of responsibility in line with relevant Circular Letters including PPT29/02 and ensure compliance with Circular Letter M29/95, particularly in the arrangements for the delivery of a minimum of 167 teaching days for all year groups.

- The Special Education Needs (SEN) department should undertake a review of the impact of the current arrangements for team teaching as the predominant model of support, update the SEN register and finalise the draft learning support policy to the board of management for ratification.
- Effective teaching and learning strategies as observed in many lessons should be further embedded by teachers.
- All subject departments should use information gathered from the analyses of student attainment in examinations and other baseline data to devise improvement plans for curriculum delivery.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management:

The board of management provides effective leadership and management for school improvement and development. The board is appropriately constituted and meets regularly. Members of the board possess wide ranging expertise and demonstrate a strong commitment to the school. At the end of each year, the board undertakes a review of its progress and identifies areas for further consideration by it for the following year. This is very good practice.

Board members have accessed training provided by Le Chéile Trust and the Joint Managerial Board pertaining to the working of the board. Minutes of board meetings are informative and generally follow a common structure and include a principal's report and general updates about progress on identified priorities. Minutes indicate that there is good attention to school development planning including the introduction of subjects such as Religion for examination at senior cycle and ongoing discussion regarding staffing and student admissions. The board is very supportive of staff continuing professional development (CPD) and provides financial contributions towards further studies.

Policy development, review and ratification feature prominently in board minutes, particularly so for the school's Admissions Policy which was updated and ratified in June 2016 to ensure that prospective students living in the area would have access to a place in the school. Commendably, a summary sheet identifying the status of policies required by legislation or circular requirement has been prepared and provides very good guidance for prioritising policies.

The board has correctly identified main priorities for school improvement; some are in line with national policy such as the implementation of school self-evaluation (SSE) and others more specific to the school, such as, developing the school's infrastructure and improving student attainment. To ensure that ongoing and sustained progress is made with each of the identified priorities, it is recommended that the board of management oversees the development of specific action plans that will indicate success criteria within specific timeframes.

The senior management team, comprising the principal and a newly-appointed deputy principal, is in place since September 2016. Already, senior management demonstrates very effective leadership, presents as a united team with a shared vision for the development of the school and a commitment to implementing and progressing the priorities of the school. Senior management has clearly defined roles and responsibilities and meets regularly to discuss the day-to-day issues.

Overall, middle management comprising assistant principals and special duties teachers are carrying out their duties in an effective manner. The duty of year head is generally assigned to the post of

assistant principal. Many of the special duties posts involve administrative or pastoral duties. The current schedule of posts does not meet the needs of the school and this is resulting in senior management undertaking some duties that would be more appropriate to middle management responsibilities. A review of the middle management post and structure had begun but due to the current national context, progress has been stalled.

It is recommended that the board of management oversees the review of the posts of responsibility, prioritises essential posts, with reference to relevant Circular Letters including PPT29/02. Regular review of the post of responsibilities duties and their descriptors should be undertaken to ensure that the school's ongoing and changing needs are met through the post structure. The board should seek a report from all post holders regarding their work on an annual basis. The review of the posts of responsibilities should facilitate senior management in developing and implementing a more long-term strategic vision for the school.

Communication and collaboration are very good in the school. A planning team meets with senior management to organise staff meetings, members of staff are surveyed regularly and weekly year head meetings are convened. Very good links have been created with the local community and communication with the wider school community takes place through events organised in the school and through online access to student reports. The school's website could usefully be updated on a more regular basis to further enhance links with the wider parent community.

An active parents' association demonstrated a strong commitment to the school and is involved in many aspects of the school. Regular meetings of the association take place and are attended by the principal and two members of the teaching staff providing regular updates regarding school related matters.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Leadership opportunities for all staff in the school are very good. Staff participates in CPD events including; Instructional leadership, Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Drochead. Staff members are also given opportunities to present to their peers at staff meetings on CPD they have attended. Arising from CPD some teachers engage in peer observations, a practice that could usefully be extended to further embed teaching and learning strategies in the school. The willingness of staff to lead various school subcommittees, co-ordinate programmes, and support co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is also acknowledged and commended.

The school offers a broad curriculum and a significant range of subjects. In recent years, Religion and Applied Mathematics have been added as senior cycle options. Management has begun planning for the movement to one-hour classes. However, it is now timely that a curriculum subcommittee be established to provide suggestions about how the school's curriculum can be delivered within the context of new timetabling arrangements.

At the time of the evaluation arrangements for the delivery the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum for first-year students was inadequate. Management should ensure that appropriate time provision is made to deliver this curriculum as per Circular Letter M11/03.

Due to the staggered start for various year groups at the outset of the academic year and TY students finishing early at the end of the school year, the minimum 167 teaching days are not provided for. It is recommended that the board of management ensures compliance with Circular Letter M29/95 in this regard.

Overall planning and co-ordination of all programmes are very good. Recently the number of students participating in the LCVP has declined. Continued monitoring of this trend is recommended. The post of co-ordinator of programmes should be developed to allow for greater links with the co-ordinators of the individual curricular programmes. In this way there is a greater oversight of how students develop skills and knowledge in areas such as work experience, links with various external businesses and agencies.

Good structures are in place to support students to choose their optional subjects at junior cycle. The means by which students and parents are informed about subject choice was identified in questionnaires as an area for further review. The creation of streamed class groupings based on academic ability particularly for Mathematics in first year and at the beginning of second year for Irish, is not in line with current educational research or the school's inclusive ethos and should be reviewed.

An extensive range of activities is provided to students through an excellent variety of co-curricular, extra-curricular and cross-curricular programmes. A significant number of teachers volunteer to provide coaching and support in these activities, including sports, school musicals, music, debating, and lunchtime clubs. Very good leadership opportunities are available for students through participation in the student council and in their role and duties associated with prefects. All involved in a range of leadership roles benefit greatly from such opportunities. To recognise student achievement and contributions in various aspects of school life an annual awards day is arranged each year.

While attendance was very good during the evaluation, some concern was expressed by staff particularly for some students in senior cycle whose attendance can be problematic. It is recommended that those with a remit for attendance through the current post structure devise a cohesive whole-school approach to monitor and tracking student attendance.

During the evaluation, student behaviour was good. Inconsistencies in the implementation of the current code of behaviour were identified during a focus meeting with students and also through staff questionnaires. The code of behaviour is identified as a policy for review with plans in place to seek the support of an external agency to progress the review and development of the policy.

Significant resources are deployed by school management to support students including those with special education needs (SEN). A core team has been established and four teachers have qualifications in the area of learning support. The predominant model of provision is team teaching for all English lessons in junior cycle and for some lower streams for Mathematics in junior cycle. The impact of such a significant resource has yet to be measured and remains an outstanding recommendation since the Whole School Evaluation (2007). It is strongly recommended that the SEN department undertake this review to identify the impact that these subject specific resources is having on the attainment of students in all subjects.

The current register for students in receipt of support was incomplete at the time of the evaluation and should be updated to include details of how and by whom support is being provided to each student. In light of the recommendations pertaining to SEN the draft Learning Support Policy should be updated and progressed for ratification to the board of management.

Overall student attainment in junior cycle is good with the performance of senior cycle students in state examinations highlighted in the board minutes as an area for improvement. Very good baseline data is made available by school management and staff is well placed to progress the school's priority to improve attainment. Each subject department should now devise strategic action plans based on

the available data and in-house examinations. These action plans should be monitored on a regular basis to inform ongoing subject department planning.

A very good guidance plan is in place and provides an overview of how career guidance is delivered on the school's curriculum. Two fully qualified staff members provide the guidance and counselling service in the school, with additional support provided from outside agencies as necessary.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

1.3. Management of facilities

The board has overseen significant investment in the updating and maintenance of the school building with further plans for refurbishment within the school. Information and communication technologies (ICT) facilities have been enhanced with the installation of data projectors in all classrooms.

The overall maintenance and upkeep of the school and its environs are of a high standard. However, some specialist rooms require further attention in the areas of general health and safety pertaining to the use of specialist equipment and in the maintenance of some of these specialist rooms.

The school's corridors are used to display recent success in all aspects of school life. Many teachers are classroom based and an array of subject specific materials, both commercially sourced and student developed were displayed in these rooms.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

In the majority of the thirty-three lessons observed the quality of learning and teaching was good or very good with some instances of exemplary practice. However, there was scope for development noted in the quality of learning and teaching in a small number of lessons.

In the vast majority of lessons, teaching approaches were effective. In some lessons where scope for improvement was noted a better balance between the content and active methodologies was recommended. The quality of subject department planning varied in the sample of subject plans reviewed. A review of the minutes of subject department meetings indicates that much time is devoted to organisational details for the subject with limited evidence of sharing of subject-specific expertise and decisions about pedagogy. It is therefore recommended that time be apportioned at subject meetings to the sharing of effective teaching and learning strategies.

The most effective schemes of work focused primarily on the delivery of the curriculum content through learning outcomes, linked with the proposed methodologies and assessment strategies. It is therefore recommended that all subject departments ensure that schemes of work are updated in this manner.

In almost all lessons, learning intentions were clearly established and this, in general, supported a good lesson structure. In lessons where the lesson content was matched with an appropriate range of methodologies, students were highly motivated and engaged in their learning. In some lessons, insufficient time was allocated to reviewing the learning intention. This is an area for development and one that should be used to assess students' readiness to progress or to identify and support planning in future lessons.

Questioning strategies were used in all lessons to varying success. Where best practice was noted teachers used a range of questions and differentiated them to support the learning of individual students. Where higher-order questions were noted, students' understanding of the lesson content was probed and deepened.

In a small number of lessons, less effective practice was observed where teachers generally focused on recall type questions which only required a single word response or responding in chorus. In these lessons, students were given few opportunities to explain their answers or to express their opinions. All teachers should ensure that the questioning style employed is sufficiently robust to ensure that students are challenged to think and provide justification for their answers, while promoting self-directed learning.

Where discovery learning opportunities were used, students were allowed to develop autonomy in their learning. Such practices should be encouraged and implemented more in lessons to promote the student voice.

In most lessons, students were given opportunities to collaborate in their learning, and it was mostly effective where the activities were designed to enable students to experience an opportunity to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning. Approaches such as think-pair-share allowed for differentiation of the content and for students to engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities.

In a few lessons, where group activities were used some students became talkative and disengaged. In some instances this disengagement was due to a lack of challenge and or the lack clarity in relation to group activities. Greater clarity and better organisation of group activities in such lessons are recommended.

In almost all lessons, a clear focus on subject-specific terminology was noted. In these lessons teachers took the time to ensure that students accurately used the terminology in context to support students' literacy development. This is very good practice.

A wide range of resources was used very effectively to support learning in almost all lessons. These included show me boards, ICT and subject specific materials. Very effective use of ICT was noted in some lessons and greatly enhanced the learning.

Assessment practices and procedures are mostly very good. Continuous assessment for second and fifth-year students has been introduced and there was evidence of regular homework being assigned. In many lessons, in-class oral formative feedback and written feedback in students' copybooks were noted. Peer-assessment was also noted in a small number of lessons. These practices should be extended in line with the school's improvement plan for assessment for learning.

It was noted that the classroom-based assessment for junior cycle English has not been completed.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1. Management

Overall good progress has been made in the implementation of most of the recommendations pertaining to inspections conducted in recent years and arising from the 2007 whole-school evaluation. Progress includes the establishment of a core team in TY and the commencement of peer-collaborative lesson visits. Some recommendations remain outstanding including clarity regarding the role of the TY year head, has yet to be fully addressed.

3.2. Learning and teaching

Recommendations regarding teaching and learning in previous inspections have mostly been addressed with the development of the students' oral capacity in modern foreign languages continuing to be an area for improvement.

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

School self-evaluation practices are well established. Committees have been formed to progress the identified themes of literacy and aspects of teaching and learning and school improvement plans have been developed. While there is a strong commitment among the school community to progress the SSE process, there is a need to take a more strategic approach to SSE using the available baseline data to formulate smart targets and action plans to progress the themes of SSE.

There is good capacity among the board of management, teaching staff, parents and students to embrace change and improvement through the self-evaluation process.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Our WSE-MLL Report affirmed the commitment of the BOM, Senior Leadership Team and the Whole School Community to our students. It commends the quality of our educational practice for optimising the educational experience and outcomes of the students in our care. Findings and recommendations are consistent with the Characteristic Spirit of the College and our Mission Statement. All recommendations serve as an excellent “blue print” in pursuit of excellence and are now the corner stone for our “Strategic Planning Process in place since October 2016.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Work already in progress includes the following:

- A ‘Post of responsibility’ review accompanied by CPD for staff to support the process.
- The development of our physical infrastructure to accommodate increased student numbers to a maximum of 900 students.
- A review of our Team Teaching Strategy which will track student specific needs and will be guided by best practice and external professional support. Our ‘Special Needs Policy’ will be updated to take account of this.
- All feedback from stakeholders involved in the evaluation process including parents, students and staff will be analysed and triangulated to inform all educational policy decisions.
- CPD for staff and the embedding of enhanced teaching methodologies is progressing to support our move to one-hour classes commencing 2017/ 2018 academic year.
- Work on the development of our School Website has commenced.
- Subject Department Planning Templates have been updated to take account and build upon ‘Baseline Data’ already to hand. E.G. (aptitude tests etc.)
- Support for students and their parents/ guardians, in preparation for State Examinations, is also underway.
- The 24 Statement of Learning will inform our curricular audit and timetabling provision across all programmes commencing September 2017.

- **THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM**

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement