Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name: Scoil Chriost Ri
Seoladh na scoile / School address: Presentation Secondary School
Borris Road
Portlaoise
Uimhir rolla / Roll number: 63451O

Date of Evaluation: 03-04-2019
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.
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 | 03-04-2019
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Inspection activities undertaken | 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

Scoil Chríost Rí secondary school for girls was founded by the Presentation Sisters and opened in 1968. The school, now under the patronage of CEIST, moved to its present purpose-built campus in 2010. Currently, there are 977 students enrolled, from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Student numbers have increased significantly in recent years. A broad and balanced curriculum, including Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, is offered to students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- An effective senior management team (SMT) leads the day-to-day operation of the school.
- There is very good support for teacher continuing professional development (CPD), but CPD opportunities are not chosen on the basis of a strategic approach to emerging pedagogical priorities.
- Student care is central to the ethos of the school; provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) is very good, however the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and SEN teams are large; and Guidance provision uneven.
- There is a strong extra-curricular programme in place which is a testament to the culture of volunteerism among staff.
- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair or satisfactory, in a small minority of lessons, to good and very good in most of the lessons observed, with some areas for development.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) reports and school improvement plans have been completed and are in operation but their impact in classrooms is limited.

Recommendations

- A vision of what constitutes good teaching and learning should be agreed amongst all stakeholders, and CPD opportunities should be availed of accordingly.
- School management should rationalise the large teams in special education and CSPE in order to better develop expertise and to encourage teamwork.
- Guidance provision should be re-evaluated in all years but especially in third year; the level of classroom contact time with each year group should be examined.
- School management should plan for the integration of identified teaching and learning improvements in classrooms in conjunction with the SSE process; SSE reports and school improvement plans (SIPs) need to be shared with the school community.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The overall quality of leadership and management is good in Scoil Chríost Rí. A very positive culture exists and the school’s values are modelled by management and staff and encouraged in students. This is exemplified by a high level of volunteerism among staff and by the commitment of the SMT to the continuous improvement of the learner experience.

The SMT works hard to promote good quality learning and teaching through a variety of means. An open-door policy is in place where all stakeholders are encouraged to engage with improvement processes. The school timetable allocates time for each subject is in line with syllabus guidelines and best practice. Teaching staff are deployed according to their qualifications and expertise, and are consulted appropriately in the framing of the timetable. In-school structures facilitate collegial and collaborative work practices amongst staff, although not all are engaging to the fullest possible extent and may need further encouragement. Planning is currently underway for the introduction of academic tracking.

There is very good support for teacher CPD. However, CPD opportunities are not chosen on the basis of a strategic or streamlined approach to emerging pedagogical priorities. A vision of what constitutes good quality teaching and learning should be agreed as a basis for choosing relevant CPD opportunities. The school should then plan for the integration of the outcomes of CPD into teaching and learning.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, including TY and LCA, as well as a wide range of academic and practical subjects. Leaving Certificate Physical Education was included on the curriculum this year, and Spanish, Technology and Technical Graphics were introduced in recent years.

Appropriate time is allocated to Relationships and Sexuality Education, through Social, Personal and Health Education in junior cycle, as part of the Religious Education (RE) programme in TY, and through the TRUST programme in 5th and 6th year, during RE class.

The CSPE teaching team is very large and it is recommended that it be reduced, in order to develop expertise and encourage teamwork.

Guidance strategies are in place to support students at critical transition times. Open nights support both parents and students at these times. Guidance provision is uneven in some areas and should be re-evaluated, in all years and especially in third year, to optimise provision. The level of classroom contact time with each year group should be examined and reallocated appropriately.

Students are encouraged to participate in after-school study and Saturday study and are provided with a study skills programme.

The school provides instructional hours in compliance with DES circular M29/95. However the timing of the later start and earlier end to the school year for TY and 6th year students should be reviewed.

Attendance is monitored and recorded systematically but strategies to maximise student attendance are unclear. It is recommended that parents of absent students are informed of absences at an earlier stage, for example by text message.

There is a clearly structured code of behaviour in place with proportionate responses to poor behaviour. Its overall tone is very positive and encouraging of positive behaviour. Student behaviour was observed to be very good during the inspection.
Student welfare is promoted through a very good range of pastoral supports. A highly effective induction programme is in place to support students in their transition from primary school; good links are also maintained with the feeder primary schools. An innovative Wellbeing programme, including a weekly Wellbeing lesson, is provided to first-year and second-year students. The possibility of extending this initiative into third year is under active consideration.

A well-organised and high-quality student-support structure is in place, including very good counselling and care strategies. The SMT, chaplain, Guidance counsellor, year heads, class counsellors, tutors and others work very hard to provide care and support to students with a variety of educational and personal needs. Very good links are maintained with a variety of outside agencies and with the local community to provide additional supports.

Success is celebrated and rewarded in a number of ways, for example through merits, commendations and awards, and both the academic and non-academic spheres of activity are recognised. It is suggested that greater use be made of students’ journals to convey positive messages to their homes.

Designated hours allocated by the Department for SEN are used for their intended purpose. Excellent work is ongoing and inclusive practices prevail in relation to SEN and resource teaching. Class and subject teachers are kept well informed of the nature of difficulties presented by their students and are given good advice on teaching methods to support their learning. A variety of interventions are thoughtfully and appropriately used, including withdrawal for individual and small-group tuition and team teaching. Appropriate planning for individuals and groups is evident, targets are set for student progress, and monitoring is very good, especially where the outcomes for students in certificate examinations are evaluated in the context of the supports provided.

To further build capacity and expertise for teachers of SEN, and to ensure consistency and continuity for students, the responsibility for delivering the support should be shared more evenly among a smaller core team.

Managing the organisation

The board of management is appropriately constituted. All members have accessed training and are clear on their roles and responsibilities, which are carried out effectively. The board is very well informed in relation to both administrative and curricular matters. Board members are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all students and staff and the board has adopted the required mandatory policies. Decision-making procedures are open and clear.

The board shares separate agreed reports with staff and parents following its monthly meetings. It is suggested that one agreed report be issued. The board maintains excellent links with the parents’ council, two of whose members are on the board.

It is suggested that the board take a more active role in relation to promoting the highest standards of teaching by contributing to developing the vision for quality teaching and learning and through receipt of annual reports from subject departments, examining their improvement plans. The board should also develop a more formal process to closely follow up on the implementation of recommendations from inspection reports.

SMT members, including three recently appointed deputy principals, have had training in their roles and they have high expectations of both staff and students. The SMT meets very frequently and effectively manages and oversees the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and an effective partnership approach to school leadership is evident. They are very approachable and maintain a high visibility on the school corridors, assisting in maintaining the very good order that is prevalent in the school. They operate an open system of communication that enables all members of the school community to contribute. It is suggested that
a review of roles and responsibilities for all SMT members is timely, in the light of emerging priorities.

The middle-management team has also been expanded recently by the appointment of a number of new post holders. Leadership roles are distributed to the middle-management team with appropriate and clearly defined duties assigned in keeping with a recent review of post duties. These duties are carried out assiduously.

It is noted that there is a high level of volunteerism amongst staff, to support in-school systems such as the tutor system. A very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is made available to students, to include sporting, social and cultural activities as well provision of additional academic opportunities.

Partnership with parents is given a high priority through the school’s open-door policy, and through consultation re policy development with the parents’ council. The parents’ council is actively involved in a number of school activities and also helps to raise funds to support extra-curricular activities. It is suggested that the school’s website, and occasional newsletters, be used to promote a higher profile for the parents’ association amongst parents in general.

There are well-established practices for review and evaluation of key aspects of the school, such as policy development and review. The school plan folder is a very high quality resource and contains all the relevant plans and policies by which the school is managed. The teachers’ handbook reflects this very well, as do the high-quality students’ journals.

School accommodation is maintained to a high standard and specialist rooms are used to the greatest extent possible for their designated purpose. The school has provided appropriate and up-to-date high-quality material resources to support learning and teaching. School management is currently examining how best to integrate the high-quality information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure into teaching and learning processes and to promote more innovative use of ICT in the classrooms. An important step is the development of a digital learning framework which is currently being progressed.

Environmental responsibility in the maintenance and use of facilities and resources is actively promoted, and the school is engaged in the Green Schools initiative, having been awarded its fifth green flag.

**Leading school development**

The board and the SMT, in collaboration with the school community, have identified an appropriate range of developmental priorities. Staff-development priorities include ongoing training and development of new teachers, retention of teachers, and building leadership capacity amongst staff. Policy-review priorities include admissions, data protection, child safeguarding, and homework policies.

Additional priorities include the development of the school website; the provision of adequate access to ICT particularly due to increased demand resulting from junior cycle reforms; and improving channels of communication, particularly in light of the increased number of students, parents and teachers.

Strategies are being developed or are already in place to achieve some these priorities. Other priorities are more aspirational at this point and action plans to achieve them are needed.
Developing leadership capacity

The principal and deputy principals use a range of skills to manage and motivate others and to support their involvement in school initiatives, including a strong extra-curricular programme. Teachers are actively encouraged by school management to collaborate and share their expertise, for example by presenting to their peers. Staff members are afforded and avail of the opportunities to lead projects and initiatives such as the Green Schools initiative and the teaching and learning team.

Student leadership opportunities are very good. The well-organised Meitheal group is recognised as a high-quality support to incoming first-year students. The democratically elected school council has been consulted in relation to policy development; and the prefects provide organisational support in all classrooms although it is recommended that additional support and recognition should be given to this group.

The school occasionally provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome, and provides valuable professional benefits for all involved.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair or satisfactory, in a very small number of lessons, to good and very good in the majority of lessons. Examples of excellent practise were frequently evident.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Classroom management was very good in almost all lessons. Students behaved very well and engaged very well in all lessons, making many valuable contributions. Rapport between teachers and students was almost universally of a very high quality and interactions were positive in a supportive learning environment. Classroom interactions were respectful and inclusive and teachers were affirming of students’ efforts.

Teachers generally had high expectations for students’ engagement and for the quality of their learning. Teaching methodologies were appropriate to the lesson content and to learners needs. Lessons were predominantly student centred and active learning methodologies were strongly in evidence. Students were well challenged by the learning activities in many lessons, although more challenge was needed in a few lessons.

Lessons, for the most part, were well structured with a clear opening, developmental stage and closing phase where learning was consolidated. Lessons were guided by learning outcomes that were shared with students. These learning outcomes were mostly clear and precise. However, in some lessons, more emphasis should have been placed on the learning outcomes to ensure that students were clear about what was expected of them. In a few lessons, the closing review was absent and teachers should ensure that time is allowed for review. In most lessons, students achieved the intended learning outcomes.

A variety of assessment for learning techniques was evident in many lessons, excellently done in some and absent in a few. Success criteria were shared with students in only a small minority of lessons. Overall, a more systematic and consistent approach is needed to the use of such techniques.

Oral feedback to students was generally good. Formative written feedback on students’ written work was observed in a number of lessons. This was done very well in most of these lessons. The provision of written feedback should be extended to all classes and, where necessary, opportunities
should be created for students to present extended written exercises, thereby enabling teachers to provide written feedback to students.

ICT was well used in many classrooms, mostly to convey information or to provide useful visuals, but very imaginatively in a few classrooms. The development of the school’s digital learning framework will provide opportunities for teachers to further develop their skills.

While students generally demonstrated good progress in meeting the literacy and numeracy demands of the subject, both literacy and numeracy support was varied and somewhat ad-hoc rather than appearing to be part of a whole-school plan. It is suggested that the school’s literacy and numeracy strategies be revisited and re-emphasised in the classrooms.

Students were enabled to engage actively in their learning in almost all lessons. Pair work and group were observed in many lessons although on occasion the group work was basic and lacking in structure. Most classrooms have a traditional layout and it is suggested that some should be adapted to facilitate group work. Better opportunities were provided for students to put their learning into practice in those lessons where more student-centred and active methodologies were used. In some lessons, it was positively noted that students were involved in monitoring and assessing their own progress or that of their peers.

Teachers’ individual and collective practice

On-going in-class assessment was mainly by means of questioning and through teachers’ movement around the classrooms, assessing students’ performance and providing help and support as necessary.

Some of the questioning was very highly skilled and ranged from lower-order questions, testing recall, to more challenging higher-order questions. In a small few lessons, teachers need to review questioning strategies to promote the development of critical thinking skills.

Some very good examples of teachers building the lesson on students’ prior learning, knowledge and experience were observed but, overall, there is scope to do more of this.

Differentiation was mostly achieved through teachers’ movement around the classrooms and their engagement with individual students. Some high-quality differentiated questioning was also evident in some classrooms. Planned differentiation was evident in few lessons, for example differentiated learning intentions, and this represents an area for further development.

Subject department folders contain much valuable information about how the departments carry out their work, including useful schemes and schedules for course delivery in almost all folders. The level of collaboration and collegiality amongst teachers in very good. The influence of the new junior cycle subject specifications is very strong in most folders, and teaching methodologies, assessment methods and learning outcomes are described. This is excellent practice.

However, little or no planning for improvement is evident in the subject department folders. Assessment information from certificate examinations only is analysed and outcomes rationalised. This data along with additional evidence from in-house assessments and other sources, should be used to inform the setting of learning targets for individuals and class groups.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Significant work has been completed at senior management and board level, leading to much positive change. For example, an overarching school development and planning team has been set
up; the school works actively to facilitate teachers and subject departments to share good practice; and the students’ council has had opportunities to address the board, although this is now in abeyance and should be reinstated.

**Teaching and Learning**

Improvements are noted in the use of assessment for learning techniques, the provision of formative written feedback on students’ written work and the quality of differentiation. However, these improvements are uneven and it is important to ensure that they are implemented across the full range of subjects.

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

**The School’s Self-Evaluation Process**

SSE processes have been established and are overseen by the board and the SMT. A dedicated team manages the process and a substantial body of work has been completed.

SSE reports and SIPs have been completed and are in operation but impact is limited in specific areas. It remains to share these reports and plans in an appropriate manner with the school community and to monitor the outcomes of this work.

The focus to date has been on improving the quality of teaching and learning, for example literacy, numeracy, and improving formative feedback and differentiation. The very good practice of linking these initiatives to recommendations made in previous inspection reports is noted. The challenge of embedding initiatives into subject department plans and into everyday practice remains ongoing.

**The School’s Capacity for Improvement**

The SMT has demonstrated considerable skill in managing and leading a complex and constantly changing organisation, especially in the context of a rapidly growing school and a changing environment. Further work is ongoing in relation to improving the quality of teaching and learning. It is recommended that all stakeholders engage in action planning to implement defined improvements in key areas such as developing the vision for good quality teaching and learning; embedding improvements into classroom practice; and maintaining and improving communications with partners in a rapidly expanding and changing environment.

Overall, capacity for improvement is very good.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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 <strong>very good</strong> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the report and acknowledges its positive and affirming nature. The Board appreciates the acknowledgement of the wonderful spirit, commitment and generosity of staff towards the smooth running and success of the school.

In particular the Board is pleased with the recognition of the following:

- Student care is central to the ethos of the school
- The strong extra-curricular programme in place is testament to the culture of volunteerism among staff
- A highly effective induction programme is in place to support students in their transition from primary school
- A high quality student support structure is in place, including very good counselling and care strategies
- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good and very good in the majority of lessons with examples of excellent practise frequently evident
- Excellent work is ongoing and inclusive practices prevail in relation to SEN and resource teaching
- Partnership with parents is given a high priority through the school’s open door policy

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

At the commencement of the new school year all stakeholders will be participating in discussions to develop an overall vision for good teaching and learning. CPD opportunities will be planned and availed of to maximise effectiveness for improving teaching and learning.

More Special Education and CSPE classes will be assigned to the core team as recommended, thus building the teams and further developing expertise with a view to enhancing learner experience.

Guidance is being formally timetabled for 3rd year for the next academic year. Provision is also being made for timetabled guidance in senior cycle including Transition Year.

Plans are in place to further improve and develop consistently high quality teaching and learning in all lessons. The Planning team and Teaching & Learning team will work with subject departments to achieve this. The School Improvement Plan has been published on the school website as recommended.