

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Peter's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Summerhill Wexford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63650U

Date of Evaluation: 25-09-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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 meets 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	23-25 September
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

St Peter's College is an all boys' diocesan school, in Wexford town, in the trusteeship of the Bishop of Ferns. It offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) with very high uptake, and the established Leaving Certificate. The school has a large campus for which there is an ongoing development programme. There are fifty-seven teachers on the staff, over half of whom were appointed in the last ten years owing to retirements and increased enrolment, which currently stands at 778.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good: some aspects of governance and the articulation of school vision require attention.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good: strengths identified can be harnessed to develop and extend practice.
- The learning environment in the school is supportive overall, but provision for students with additional needs does not meet current good practice guidelines.
- Teachers, with the support of school management, demonstrate openness to change and innovation.
- Recommendations in previous reports have been substantially addressed.
- The school has very good capacity to bring about improvement where necessary.

Recommendations

- School management should undertake a thorough reorganisation of the school's provision for students with additional educational needs, to ensure that all supports provided are targeted appropriately and underpinned by principles of inclusivity and differentiation.
- School management should lead a reappraisal by all stakeholders of the school's guiding vision, to develop a shared statement of the principles that inform school development and practice.
- To build on the reflective practices already in place, teachers should extend peer observation to focus on specific aspects of teaching and to share good practice, and should include students' views and voices in planning for enhanced learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. There are elements of very good leadership in the work of the senior management and middle leadership teams. Further collective building of systems and structures to support school development would harness the full leadership potential within the school.

Leading learning and teaching

The leadership of learning and teaching is effective. The learning culture that has been established in the school is evident in the implementation of the new Junior Cycle curriculum, and a commendable peer observation initiative involving all teachers. The board and senior management team support teachers' engagement in continuing professional development (CPD), and the senior management team itself avails of CPD that strengthens its capacity to lead teaching and learning.

The senior management team supports and affirms teachers' individual and collective efforts to introduce and embed new approaches, such as the enhanced use of digital platforms to support teaching and learning. As these new practices are adopted, it would be useful to focus increasingly on monitoring their implementation and assessing their impact, through continued application of the self-evaluation process.

The school offers a broad, balanced curriculum that includes a wide range of sciences, languages, arts, and practical subjects. Effective systems to enable informed subject choice and access have been developed. These include a year-long subject sampling programme in first year, and TY modules giving students an experience of optional Leaving Certificate subjects. As the new Junior Cycle moves towards full implementation, it is worth keeping the current first-year sampling programme under review to ensure that it continues to merit this allocation of time.

Effective structures are in place to support many aspects of students' educational, social and personal wellbeing. A commendable level of reflection has gone into developing the year head and class tutor roles; for example, the senior and middle leadership teams have agreed that continuity of year head as the year group progresses through the school is a priority. The school's student support team is convened on a case-by-case basis, rather than having regular scheduled meetings; while the school is satisfied that this approach is responsive to students' needs, it should be reviewed periodically with reference to the National Educational Psychological Service guidelines.

A comprehensive whole-school guidance plan details the provision of educational, vocational and personal guidance. While school management recognises and values the considerable personal counselling element of the guidance service's work, it is advisable to ensure that adequate focus on educational and career guidance for all is maintained.

The school changed from a system of streaming to mixed ability class formation some years ago, and has worked to provide all students with equality of access and an inclusive physical and educational environment. Very good initiatives are in place to enable the participation of students with autism in social and extracurricular aspects of school life, for example, and the school greatly values and supports the contribution of the team of special needs assistants to its inclusive practices.

However, current provision for students with additional and special educational needs is not in line with a key principle of the Resource Allocation Model, introduced in 2017: that is, the right of students to learn with their peers, while also receiving all necessary additional supports. A considerable proportion of the resource teaching allocation is used to create small special classes in various subjects for which students are withdrawn from their peer class groups. This use of the resource is not permitted under Department regulations. Addressing this issue will require very

significant re-thinking and re-organising of provision. This process should be initiated as soon as possible, and should include consideration of continuing professional development and up-to-date qualifications in special education; arrangements for targeted and planned interventions to address students' specific learning needs; and the development of differentiated teaching approaches to enable all teachers to fulfil their responsibilities towards all the students in their classes.

Managing the organisation

The board of management diligently fulfils its statutory obligations as employer and manager, and generally meets once a month throughout the school year. It works not only to maintain but to develop the school as a learning organisation, and is attentive to effective teacher recruitment and the development of school facilities. In reflecting on its role, the board might consider how it could further strengthen its educational leadership role.

The present board was correctly constituted up to the beginning of the 2019/20 school year; the parent body now needs to nominate a current parent to the board to replace an outgoing member. The chairperson should ensure the eligibility of board members on an ongoing basis. The nomination of male and female members to the board by the parent and teacher bodies is commendable, and it would benefit the board for the trustee to consider gender balance among trustee nominees when the next board is being formed.

All statutory policies are in place, and are reviewed regularly. The board has made considerable changes to its admissions policy and is aware of the future implications of the 2018 Admissions Act. It is advised to look again at references in the admissions policy to the enrolment of students with additional needs to ensure that they clearly convey the school's commitment to inclusion.

The senior management team, comprising the principal and two deputy principals, provides competent and effective leadership and management. Areas of responsibility have been identified and delegated, and each member brings a relevant skillset to the distributed and shared leadership roles. The team ensures the maintenance of a secure and safe learning environment, and the prevailing school atmosphere is friendly and orderly. The day-to-day operation of the school is efficient overall, although aspects of in-school communication, as reflected in responses to the teacher survey conducted during the evaluation, merit some further investigation.

The school's code of behaviour is generally perceived as fair, and the ladder of referral is well understood. The year heads and deputy principals, who have a key role in its day-to-day implementation, are committed to non-escalation and to bringing about improvement, and acknowledge the role of tutors in encouraging positive behaviour and attitudes. While the code of behaviour needs to be robust enough to withstand challenge, it is worth ensuring through regular review that it sufficiently emphasises this positive focus.

Leading school development

The board of management and the senior management team are conscious of the school's long tradition and its reputation for academic and sporting achievement. They envisage school development as moving forward within this context and would like to see the school remain 'a school of choice' into the future, while also responding to educational change. This view has shaped priorities for developing the school's teaching and learning infrastructure and practices, including the planned expansion of science and art facilities and the promotion of digital learning initiatives. The school's response to change has been visible and strategic, and has been supported by purposeful self-evaluation.

When asked about the school's guiding vision during the evaluation, different groups of stakeholders offered varied but positive responses. The school's Latin motto, which may be translated as 'learn to be useful', was reasonably familiar but not widely understood, and the concept of a well-rounded education was often mentioned. A clearer articulation of the vision for the school as a provider of

inclusive and holistic education would be a worthwhile endeavour. It is good that a discussion of school culture was initiated with staff by one of the deputy principals. This should be further pursued with the involvement of the trustee, board, students, and parents, so that decisions taken in key areas such as Wellbeing are informed by a shared guiding vision, and not only by practical considerations.

The second deputy principal has a lead role in Junior Cycle implementation, and is committed to its successful embedding in the school. The voluntary board of studies which considers areas of curriculum is a valuable forum. There is merit in encouraging teachers' wider participation in its work, and ensuring effective two-way communication with all teachers, as the focus moves to the full implementation of curriculum change.

The school has an active and prominent parents' association, whose work is widely acknowledged and valued. Its regular meetings are attended by a member of the senior management team, and it has close links with the board. The association is consulted on policies, and is aware of school developments. It does considerable fund-raising, and is empowered to decide how money is spent, for example funding a range of practical initiatives to improve students' social lives within the school. Its officers expressed great willingness to work more closely with the student council to inform its own work in supporting students.

Developing leadership capacity

The recent review of posts of responsibility has enhanced distributed leadership in the school, and encouraged post-holders to develop their roles and responsibilities. It affirmed the importance of the year head role, and weekly year head meetings support the sharing of problems and solutions. To further strengthen the middle leadership layer in the school, it would be worth prioritising high-value use of this meeting time to collectively develop effective practice in all aspects of the role.

A highly commendable school-wide peer observation initiative is now embedded in teachers' practice, enabling purposeful development and sharing of teaching and learning approaches, and promoting teachers as leaders of learning. As this initiative progresses, its more targeted use to develop and extend practice in specific areas, for example the teaching of languages or practical subjects, should be considered.

Students have various opportunities to experience leadership, including the student council, the Meitheal programme for which there are many more applicants than there are places, team sports, and student-led clubs. The student council would benefit from closer links with the parents' association and board, as a consultative body and a sounding board. It would be a very worthwhile exercise to canvass students' views on other ways in which they might experience leadership as students and, more broadly, extend their voice as stakeholders so they can play a part in key decisions about their own learning and development.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Thirty lessons were observed, including some double lessons. Overall the quality of teaching and learning was good, with many instances of highly effective practice, and very few elements of less than satisfactory practice within lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of learner outcomes and learner experiences was good. Students demonstrated high levels of interest and motivation and were mostly willing to contribute and participate co-operatively with all activities. Interactions between students were respectful in all settings and there was good rapport between students and teachers throughout.

High levels of learner engagement were a feature of many lessons, especially where lesson topics and well-structured activities stimulated and held students' interest. In highly effective lessons, students experienced a very good balance of challenge and support which enabled them to probe and grapple with learning, and experience success at various levels. In these lessons, students' natural curiosity was evident and they were willing to persist with increasingly challenging tasks or investigations.

In most lessons there was good or very good attainment of the intended learning. In many lessons shared learning intentions brought clarity to the learning, and in some cases facilitated reflection and a sense of having made progress. In a minority of lessons, however, the learning tasks or activities were not matched sufficiently closely with the particular needs and interests of the students, taking into account the varying levels of ability within the group.

Highly effective development of communication and teamwork skills was evident in some collaborative lessons. At times, students were given opportunities to demonstrate to their peers how they had tackled tasks and well-guided plenary discussion supported the development of tenacity, student independence and ownership of learning. In a number of lessons, the focus on oral communication and presentation allowed students demonstrate their strong skills in articulation and working out of ideas.

In some lessons student engagement and participation was limited by tasks that were excessively exam-oriented, relied too heavily on textbooks or worksheets, and lacked a requirement for meaningful or deep thinking about what was to be learned. Outcomes were less positive in these instances. In some cases, students were able to provide superficial answers to some of the textbook questions but when presented with more challenging tasks or questions, their ability to use the information meaningfully or apply it in different ways was insecure.

In general, students experienced a high quality, supportive learning environment. Learning spaces were accessible and comfortable and in some classrooms good displays of student work were mixed with positive messages about learning and wellbeing. However, in some classrooms, collaborative work was hindered by fixed desks which could not be readily adapted to accommodate group interactions.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teaching was very good or good in most lessons. Classes were generally very well managed and teachers ensured that prevailing classroom interactions were aimed at supporting and encouraging students in their learning. It was evident that teachers knew their students well and there was very good affirmation of students' efforts.

The highly effective practice noted in a significant minority of lessons was brought about by thoughtful planning, which put student engagement and the development of students' skills at the heart of the learning. In these lessons students were presented with well-structured and carefully sequenced learning activities, which enabled them to tackle increasingly difficult tasks and experience challenge at appropriate levels. Opportunities to work collaboratively, discuss, share ideas, or investigate learning were designed to encourage depth of thinking and response and facilitate meaningful learning of the content.

Very skilful questioning was a feature of many lessons. At times global questioning was used to surface what was known about a topic and stimulate interesting and varied discussion. At other well-chosen times, directed questioning was used effectively to scaffold thinking and lead students through a learning process. In one lesson, measured teacher responses to students' contributions were very effective in developing listening skills amongst peers and confidence in the speaker. However, in some lessons there were missed opportunities to facilitate student discussion and

provide opportunities for students to tease things out and become fluent in the language of the subject.

Effective differentiation was very evident in the questioning strategies used in all lessons. Teachers were familiar with their students' various levels of attainment and targeted their questions very appropriately. There is now a need to expand and develop this strategy across all aspects of learning so that lessons can provide appropriate challenge and scaffold success for all. A collective approach to this important area is recommended. Whole staff input on differentiation, as well as systematic sharing of ideas and resources, can support this.

There was good focus on formative assessment in some lessons and very useful written formative feedback was noted in some copybooks. Peer-assessment, self-assessment and a small range of other assessment strategies were observed; there was scope to extend these strategies across other lessons in order to further promote student ownership of and responsibility for learning.

Digital technology was used very effectively to enhance learning in some lessons; video clips were used to enhance engagement and present content in dynamic ways. In other lessons it was used solely to project the textbook and there were missed opportunities to broaden and expand the learning. Subject departments should consider ways of sharing practice and ideas in utilising this rich resource.

In a minority of lessons there was a need for greater clarity of purpose, sometimes in the shared learning intentions, sometimes in the learning activities and at times in the explanations given to students. Individual and subject department planning should seek opportunities to reflect upon, discuss and document successful classroom practice so that the skilful use of highly effective strategies can be extended across all lessons.

It is commendable that the practice of teachers observing each other in the classroom is well established in the school. This highly effective method of enhancing teaching practice should now be used to target particular areas and facilitate individual and collective development.

Subject department planning is well developed in a number of subjects, and requires considerable work in others. Good practice included reorientation towards year plans based on learning outcomes, varied and flexible teaching approaches for specific purposes, and reflective and innovative assessment methods. These good practices should be extended into subjects where planning remains content-focused and where the teaching approaches described lack a clear rationale.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall, there has been good implementation of recommendations.

Leadership and Management

Significant recommendations on class formation, review of posts, and provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) that were made in a 2009 WSE have been addressed.

Teaching and Learning

Since the WSE, subject inspections in Irish, German, business subjects, Geography and Mathematics have taken place. They made key recommendations on increasing oral communication activities, co-operative and active learning, and directed questioning.

During this evaluation, lesson observations provided evidence of some very good questioning, many opportunities for students to work together, and opportunities for students to use the target language meaningfully. A continuing focus on these areas is desirable.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school has engaged very well with the process of self-evaluation as required by circular, and has used it effectively to support implementation of Junior Cycle, and teachers' and students' purposeful use of digital technology. Monitoring the implementation and assessing the impact of teaching and learning strategies are the steps in the process that now merit particular focus.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has very good capacity to bring about improvement where necessary.

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 students' 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 students' 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

1. "The School complies with all Child Safeguarding regulations"
2. "Recommendations in previous reports have been substantially addressed".
3. "The overall quality of teaching and learning is good" and "students experienced a high quality, supportive learning environment "
4. "The overall quality of leadership and management is good" and there is "very good leadership in the work of the senior management and middle management teams". "The senior management team, comprising the principal and two deputy principals, provides competent and effective leadership and management. The team ensures the maintenance of a secure and safe learning environment, and the prevailing school atmosphere is friendly and orderly".
5. "The school has very good capacity to bring about improvement where necessary" and "the school's response to change has been visible and strategic, and has been supported by purposeful self-evaluation"

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

The Board of Management, having considered the current provision of additional education needs, has selected two members of staff who will undertake the diploma in special education needs, commencing in September 2020.

From September 2020, the school will review its current provision for second year and fifth year students with additional educational needs to ensure that they will be provided with targeted supports, underpinned by principles of inclusivity and differentiation.

The Board of Management will begin a process of a reappraisal by all stakeholders of the school's guiding vision to develop a shared statement that informs the school's development and practice.

The Board of Management is delighted that the inspectorate commended the highly effective practice of teachers observing each other in the classroom, thus enabling purposeful development and sharing of teaching and learning approaches and promoting teachers as leaders of learning. The Board will continue to encourage this practise to facilitate individual and collective development.